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SOCIAL

DISTINCTION

OR

HEARTS AND HOMES;

BY

M^{rs} Ellis.

Author of "The Women of England," "Family Secrets," &c. &c.



"She sat alone."



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SOCIAL DISTINCTION;

OR,

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CHAPTER I.



As the traveller who climbs the mountain height, pauses sometimes to look back upon the valley he is leaving behind, and, turning from the rugged pinnacles which his ambitious tread is mounting, half wishes himself back again beneath the shelter, and amongst the greenness and the fertility, of the distant vales, so the aspiring girl whose history we have been tracing, had her moments for looking back; and if not exactly for longing to plunge again into the obscurity from which she had so recently emerged, at least for wishing that she had a better and a nobler eminence before her, than that which she was now ascending.

"I would rather be a poor artist after all," said Dorothy Dalrymple, turning over her drawings one evening, soon

after her interview with Kate Staunton. "I would rather live in an attic, and do something really worthy of being admired, than be admired for nothing. I will take to my drawing again, and rise early and work hard. I was happier then than now."

After forming this sage resolution, in which she was very much in earnest, so long as it lasted, Dorothy applied to her father to know if she could again have the benefit of instruction from her master ; and was rather agreeably surprised to learn, that until some preliminary steps had been taken, the works at the great embankment were not likely to proceed, and that Arnold Lee was consequently a little more at leisure than his master wished him to be. Accordingly, Dorothy prepared herself for work with an indefinite feeling that it would at least be a resource, and would afford some relief from thoughts which were altogether not so satisfactory as they were exciting, and which, the more they were dwelt upon, the more they troubled and perplexed her.

Dorothy had no patience with anything which perplexed her. She did not like calculating, reasoning, reflecting, and then being herself responsible for the choice she might make, or the decision at which she might arrive. It is true, she liked to hurry onward. No English traveller on a railroad ever liked better to be hurried along at the utmost possible speed ; but then she liked that circumstances should be blamed if she went on the wrong line, or that some mysterious fate should take from her shoulders the burden of having to *will*, as well as to *act*.

In this stage of her experience, Dorothy was a good deal annoyed by conflicting tendencies of this nature ; sometimes to extricate herself from what was mean and contemptible, and to act according to her better judgment

—sometimes to rush in headlong, yet further, and deeper, and to forget herself in the whirl and the excitement of the life for which she felt that her talents were fitted.

On the day of her resolution to take up drawing again as a resource, it is possible that Dorothy felt a more than usual amount of vexation mingling with her grave thoughts. She had just returned from a call at the residence of the Ashleys, in pursuance of a promise made to Kate Staunton; and for the first time since being fairly engaged in her pursuit of distinction, she had been treated with something so very much like contempt, that not to understand it, she must have been blind and obtuse indeed. Not that the Misses Ashley, or their mamma, were absolutely rude; they were ingenious enough to keep strictly within the prescribed rules of common politeness, for this reason—they really wished to keep up a kind of calling acquaintance with Dorothy, because they would then be better able to speak pointedly of her eccentricities, and to detail facts which could no longer be disputed, in connection with a personal acquaintance. Until now, they had found themselves defective here; for whatever insinuation they might throw out, or whatever charge they might bring forward, was always liable to be frustrated in its object, by the direct inquiry—“Do you visit Miss Dalrymple?” or “Do you ever meet her?” It was not their object, therefore, to break with her entirely, now that she had actually brought herself before their notice, and their amiable calculations were acted upon accordingly.

On the other hand, Dorothy was equally determined not to show that she felt the spirit or the meaning of their behaviour, or that they had the power to baffle her in anything she chose to undertake. If it was her pleasure

to call on Kate Staunton, what was that to them ; and with an air of the most perfect satisfaction, she had wished them good morning, secretly determining that neither Mrs. Ashley, nor her daughters, should obstruct her progress towards any kind of distinction which she might choose to attain, whatever else in the world might stand in her way. It was rather humiliating to Dorothy to think of their returning her call, and to think too of the manner in which they would look around upon her father's parlour : she, therefore, addressed herself only to Kate when she spoke of meeting again, and so instructed old Bridget at home, as to provide in the best manner she could against their actual admission into the house. If, through the mismanagement of this luckless individual, they should really penetrate into the interior of her abode, she had only to escape from it by another outlet ; and, to provide a freer egress for herself in all such cases, she took possession of a hitherto unoccupied apartment for the practice of her drawing lessons—an apartment which looked desolate enough, and not the less so, that the window opened into that little garden where the winds of autumn had already begun to scatter the faded foliage of the trees.

“ Once,” said Dorothy, as she looked out, while waiting for her instructor, “ I used to find pleasure in raking up those yellow leaves, though the winds dispersed them all again faster than I could gather them together. What am I doing now ? Anything more profitable than gathering dead leaves together, for the winds to blow away ? ”

Leaving Dorothy to the indulgence of a mood which, as usual, proved too transient to be productive of any lasting results, even had it been attended with any decided wish to turn it to such good account, we must take up the

story under a different form, and turn for a moment to the character of Arnold Lee, because, though an especial favourite, we have now to confess, before giving evidence of the fact, that he was not without the common weaknesses incident to human nature; and that, like many of the best and noblest specimens of the family of mankind, he was at times led on by inclination to the very verge of folly, and perhaps of sin, before discovering that it was inclination merely, and not right feeling, by which he was actuated. Like many, too, of the same class, he had sometimes little to thank himself for, when he escaped the consequences of pursuing his blind self-will. He might, had he chosen so to express himself, have said that some lucky circumstance always intervened and saved him at the critical moment; but the language of his heart found a different utterance, and every time that his feet were kept from stumbling, he scrupled not to acknowledge, with deep gratitude and humility, the operation of an influence higher and stronger and holier than his own firm resolution, excellent and useful as that often was.

We have already said that, as a boy, Arnold was rather remarkable for a disposition to take the law into his own hands; to say of wrong, it should exist no longer, and of right that it should be established. It was, consequently, not unnatural that this disposition should grow up with his bodily frame, stronger and stronger in all its natural impulses; and yet in a measure subdued by painful and chastening experience, aided by his own right feeling on some points, and good sense on all. That the disposition still was there, admitted of no manner of doubt; and whenever he believed he could do good, it was apt to beset him with the temptation to resist, rather than to endure; so that to remain quiescent while anything wrong,

was really going on before him, in which he conceived it possible that he could be instrumental to save from injury, peril, or injustice, was more difficult to him than to endure the greatest amount of personal suffering himself.

The great weakness of his life may already have been guessed, or rather anticipated, by the reader ; for it had yet assumed no definite form nor sentiment ; and, indeed, what was, what could be, Dorothy Dalrymple to him ? Unlike himself in character, as well as principles—unlike him, too, in the tone and temper of her mind—in her feelings, in her habits, and in the medium through which she looked at everything in the heavens above, or in the earth beneath ; except, perhaps, its superficial beauty, at which they both could look through the same glass, beholding the same lights, and shades, and tints of colouring—unlike in everything which made her what she was, she must have lost her own identity, or he his, before they could have fully sympathised together. Yet, strange to say, his fancy clung around her ; and already he began to feel as if to save her from fluttering down the stream over which her light sails seemed to spread, would be an enterprise worth more than the whole world beside could offer him, with all its wealth, and all its glory.

He had thought, on the morning when he stood watching her in Sir James Crawford's library, that he had done with her for ever—that she was not worth even the few thoughts he had bestowed upon her ; that she was alike without a mind to reason, or a heart to feel. He had even reproached himself for having wasted upon her a moment's interest ; and, in no amiable temper, had given utterance to expressions connected with her name, which he would have listened to with little patience or charity, had he heard any other person using the same. But why, after

all, was he so angry? or of what had he, of all human beings, cause to complain? What, again, was Dorothy Dalrymple to him, that he should fret and fume, because she chose to be surrounded by admirers, and to amuse herself with their attentions?

It was not the mildest ingredient in Arnold's cup of vexation that night, when he found himself located at a little country inn, that he had cause to be angry with himself. "A snarling, envious, backbiting simpleton that you are," said he, "troubling yourself with other people's affairs, when they are caring for you and your's no more than this boot of mine is caring for this dying fire." And so saying, with this pleasant conclusion, he thrust the toe of his weather-beaten boot into the expiring embers, and then went supperless to bed; for the practice of a rigid system of starvation, whenever it could be carried out with any degree of comfort to a healthy and vigorous frame, was one of the few chances he had of gaining upon the scanty remittances doled out by his master's iron hand.

To retire to bed, however, is not always to sleep, and various and busy were the thoughts which there crowded upon Arnold's mind. Night, too, is the time for relentings of almost every kind; and he then began to see how he had been too severe upon an almost friendless girl, whose high spirit had been left to hurry on its own wild course, alike without guidance, and without wholesome restraint.

"Why should I blame her," he asked, still soliloquising, long after the midnight hour, "for choosing what so many women of higher advantages choose?—why should I condemn her for acting out the vanity which so many others feel? How much more noble would it be to endeavour to reclaim her—to be her friend, her adviser—to give her grave counsel, and to warn her of the consequences of her

folly. I should, at all events, by adopting these means have discharged a duty, whether she would choose to follow my advice or not."

It was much more agreeable for Arnold to sink to sleep, under this idea, than with the jar of those conflicting emotions which he had previously felt still fresh upon him. It was always satisfactory to him to resolve to perform a duty, whatever it might be ; and if, in this instance, the most superficial thinker, with only half a mind, could have told him that he was mistaking for duty what was manifestly nothing more than inclination, Arnold was not the first sensible man who ever suffered under a similar confusion of ideas.

Not many days after this, Arnold was recalled from his occupation at the place of embankment ; and having once more resumed his place in Mr. Dalrymple's office, was by no means unpleasantly surprised to receive an announcement of his assistance again being required, as a teacher of drawing, to the eccentric individual, who, unaccountably to himself, had occupied so many of his thoughts.

There was to Arnold a twofold pleasure now in being admitted into the interior of his master's residence. He could there see the faithful friend of his family, whose services had placed her far above the level of an ordinary menial in his estimation. He could ask her of his mother and Lucy—consult with her about their circumstances—pour into her never-tiring ear his fears and his anxieties ; and more than all, he could hear in his turn, from her overburdened heart, the full outpouring of her intelligence respecting his miserable father. This he listened to in private ; for Dorothy, already made acquainted with many of the circumstances connected with their history, could readily understand how he and his mother's confidential

servant might have facts to relate, and plans to discuss, in which she, as a stranger, could not possibly, with any propriety, take a part.

But if Arnold had indulged in wandering thoughts before this interview—if for a time he had been less occupied with the situation of his family than might have been expected from so kind a brother, and so devoted a son—the full tide of his former feelings rushed back in all its force, now that he learned the reality of those strange impressions relating to the appearance of his father, which he had regarded only as arising out of the fanciful creations of a disordered mind.

Arnold Lee was now himself again ; for what had he to do with helping, or even with saving others, while one so near to him as his own father was undergoing such a fearful struggle. Embittered as his feelings had been against this wretched man, for all the wrong and all the misery he had been the means of creating ; not rashly, by some sudden act of impetuous and misguided impulse, but deliberately, coldly, cruelly—for years making his calculations in secret, and acting out his selfish and hard purposes before the world : embittered as the heart of the son had once been against such a father (and he had little personal cause for feeling otherwise), he could not contemplate him now, in his fallen, abject state, without the deepest emotions of tenderness and pity. More especially, when he thought of him as at last brought down to crouch at midnight on the grave of his own father, and there to hold communion with his own soul, as in the sight of God.

The sensation of hearing that a hardened character, after a long career of selfishness and pride, is brought down so low, has something in itself so touching, that it seems impossible at such a time to cherish towards them

any longer the least tendency to resentful feeling. Knowing the great agony which such a character must have endured, must be enduring, while thus circumstanced, we naturally feel that they have suffered enough, without our even wishing them to suffer more; and so strong in Arnold's mind was this sensation, that he now only longed to be the ministering angel himself of some consolation to his father.

"Better not meddle," was Betsy's excellent advice, whenever he gave utterance to any disposition of this kind. "I have had enough to do, to bring him near to confession myself; and even now he might be all thrown back again by the least interference that was not of his own choosing."

"But do you really think that he will confess," said Arnold, "and actually deliver himself up to justice?"

"I do," said Betsy, very thoughtfully.

"What is your reason for thinking so?" asked Arnold, again.

Betsy seemed rather at a loss for any reason that would be intelligible to one who had not witnessed what she had done, but she answered, still very gravely—"Because good is stronger than evil; or, in other words, God has more power than the devil: and I do believe there is something in his heart already, that will not let him do the wickedness he talks of doing."

"What does he threaten?" asked Arnold.

"You may easily guess," replied Betsy. "He carries about with him a loaded pistol, and some poisonous drug, with either of which, I believe, he would destroy himself, in case of surprise."

"And yet," said Arnold, "he must be every moment in the utmost peril."

"Every moment. The great wonder is—and to me," said Betsy, "it appears nothing less than an interposition of Providence to rescue his poor soul from everlasting destruction—the great wonder is, that he has not, before this, been detected and seized; only that you never saw a man so changed!—unwashed, unshorn—the sun and the wind making havoc of his once good looks, and fair complexion—you never saw a gentlemanly figure brought to such a state! My own belief is, that he cannot stand it much longer; and that want and misery have done their part, as they often do, to bring about repentance. But I would not trust him now with so much as twenty pounds—nay, not even five—to begin the world afresh with. My brother would stand a poor chance of being honourably liberated then."

"And is it possible that you," said Arnold, "feeling this doubt about the strength of my father's better resolutions, can let him go from day to day, your brother suffering in his place, and you not sure but even now he has escaped you, and is sailing for some distant country? Is it possible that you can withstand the just and natural impulse, to set those upon him who can make their victim sure."

"I have had great struggles with myself," said Betsy, "as you may think; and even now, should the worst come of it, I have my plans laid for catching him. I have had great struggles, I confess; for there was a time, and that not long ago, when I thought that neither fire nor sword should make me loose my hold, if once I could but grasp his arm—if once I could but find his track, I thought no hound should follow its game more closely, than I would follow him up to justice and to death."

"And what has changed your spirit?" inquired Arnold.

"In the first place," replied Betsy, "he is not the murderer I thought him. That has changed my feelings greatly. So far, indeed, from being a murderer himself, it seems to me that the very fact of having caused that old man's death, though undesignedly, has been the great means of bringing him to his present state of half-repentance ; for he sees now to what that burning thirst of his may lead. And yet I should hardly say that in him it was the thirst for gold, seeing how free he was sometimes in spending. Indeed, the thing puzzles me altogether. I cannot tell what it was, unless he had sold himself to the powers of darkness."

"Ah ! Betsy," said Arnold, "there are passions quite as strong as the love of gold. There is the love of what gold purchases."

"What !" exclaimed Betsy, "do you think it was the love of his house, his furniture, his table services, and all that, which drove him on ?"

Arnold could not help smiling for a moment, notwithstanding the seriousness of the subject, and the actual horrors with which it was connected ; but the smile soon passed away, and again he asked of his companion, if she really believed his father would deliver himself up.

"It is that for which I wait, and hope, and pray," said Betsy ; "but who can tell ? I confess I have my fears. He has met me once, by his own appointment, and still he was hesitating. It seemed to me that he was thinking more of the public shame of being pointed at, and talked about, than of the real justice of the act."

"Ah ! there has been the mischief all along !" exclaimed Arnold. "It has been this subserviency to public opinion which has been the ruin of us all : it is this subserviency of honest principle to the respect, the homage, paid to

mere external show, which is the ruin of so many families—the ruin of society—of the whole world.”

“That’s what I always told my poor brother,” observed Betsy. “And he never gave himself up fairly to this folly, until he had the misfortune to get married. In my opinion, it’s *that* first that ruins people, and want of honest principle next.”

“Place want of principle where you will,” said Arnold, “it is the same thing. And yet, though the world goes on abusing dishonesty—making laws to restrain it, and establishing prisons and punishments to chastise it—how little it does to encourage or reward true honesty. Look at me just now, Betsy—look at my coat—examine the seams at my elbows, and the collar on my neck. I have examined them all a little too minutely for my peace of mind. I tell you candidly, it has cost me real pain to put on this old coat to-day. I am not boasting; indeed, I am too much ashamed of my littleness of mind for that. You know the reason why I have put the coat on—simply, because I have not the means of paying for another—simply, because I love honesty, and because the troubles of my family have taught me to hate its opposite. And yet not one of all the beings whom I meet but would esteem me more, and would treat me with greater respect, if I should wear a better coat, obtained on any terms, so long as they fell short of actual vulgar theft.”

“And very few,” observed Betsy, “would esteem you a bit the better, for wearing your old coat because it was honest to do so.”

“Very few would ask me to dine with them for that reason,” said Arnold, smiling.

“It’s a queer world,” responded Betsy; “and I often think, would take a good deal of setting to rights.”

“And yet,” said Arnold, “it’s opinions have an immense power over us, one way or another.”

“That’s the reason,” observed his companion, “why I say it would be so much better for the world to set to, and do its own work, and not leave it to here and there one to do all the good that is done, while the rest go grumbling on, without even stretching out a helping hand. It strikes me, and always has struck me, since I knew anything of life, that those who love the world best, who follow its ways, and slave and suffer for its hard-earned favours, abuse it the most. Now, they must have got a little tired, a little disappointed, before they came to that; they must have found out that their master was not worth serving—that the pleasure, or the glory, they had been seeking, was not a real pleasure, nor a true glory. Well, my fancy is, that seeing almost all mankind, and womankind, too, are in the same predicament, suppose they should agree amongst themselves to set up another kind of glory, and make it honourable to be honest! What think you, Mr. Arnold, of that?”

“I think,” replied Arnold, “that if you could bring that about, you would be exactly the kind of reformer the world is in want of, just now. But in the meantime, and as I fear there is little chance of your grand reform taking place, either to-day or to-morrow, I wish you would take my apology to Miss Dalrymple, for detaining her so long, and add that, if she wishes it, I am now ready to attend upon her.”

“Of course,” said Betsy; and she was going away about her business, when, as if suddenly recollecting something of importance, she walked close up to Arnold, and laid her hand upon his arm, with considerable impressiveness, saying, in a half-suppressed voice—“Touching that young

lady, take care what you do. There are queer people in the world, Mr. Arnold, or the world itself wouldn't be so queer as it is."

Having discharged her mind of this most unintelligible comment upon her young mistress, Betsy turned away, without once looking back to see the blush which her strange words had called up into Arnold's face, or the look of dissatisfaction which crossed his brow, at what he felt very much inclined, just then, to regard as an an impertinent interference. Before he had time to collect his thoughts, however, the door again opened, and Dorothy, laden with her drawing materials, entered the room.

CHAPTER II.



LEAVING the drawing lessons to proceed, not quite so rapidly as the social intercourse and growing intimacy to which they very naturally led, we will turn again to the impression made upon the mind of

Kate Staunton, by her interview with Dorothy Dalrymple; though exactly to define the nature of that impression would be no easy task. Indeed, it was altogether so different from what she had anticipated, that she would have found it impossible to define it herself. Had she first met with Dorothy in the midst of society, it is probable that her expectations would have been fully realised; but simple, quiet, unpretending as she seemed on the morning of that call, how could it be that this was the same girl of whom people spoke in such exaggerated terms, either of flattery or condemnation.

It is true she had appeared to Kate somewhat extravagant and bitter in her remarks upon others, and a little fonder of talking of herself than seemed to her visitor quite womanly and agreeable; but these were defects which she felt would not necessarily stand in the way of

their future intimacy, provided they had sufficient congeniality on points of greater importance. With these feelings, Kate had met Dorothy, when her call was returned; and though, on this occasion, much charmed with the dignity and self-possession with which she received the very questionable attentions of the ladies of the Ashley family, she was, at the same time, slightly repelled by the evident power of assuming what she did not feel, which had already become sufficiently evident to a penetrating eye, in the countenance and manner of her new friend.

“I am afraid I should never know when she was acting, and when she was quite herself,” said Kate, in a mental soliloquy which she held, soon after Dorothy had taken leave. “I feel sure she was boiling with resentment against my aunt and cousins, and yet what a smile was on her lips when she bade them good morning.”

If the situation of Kate Staunton as a member of the Ashley family was by no means satisfactory before this period of her history, it was now becoming less so every day; and especially as rumours were spreading of an anticipated connexion which would necessarily bring the Dalrymples into close relation with the Ashleys. It was, indeed, very generally reported that Dorothy was the lady of Frederick Ashley's choice; and that the beautiful residence he was fitting up, in a style which furnished a never-failing topic of conversation to the inhabitants of M——, was arranged with strict reference to the artistic taste of that young lady.

Perhaps no single particle of gossip that ever floated on the idle breath of a morning caller, since the world of morning calls began, ever fell with more piercing and unwelcome emphasis upon a listening ear than this; not upon the ears only, but the hearts, of the Ashley family. All

except the father, seemed to make it their especial business to lose their senses on the subject, from sheer vexation. He, good easy man, inquired what difference it would make to them if his son should marry an American squaw, seeing that they held so little intercourse with him, now that he was a rich and rising man. If things were as they ought to be, his family might be rising with him ; but it was some people's lot to be always getting up, while others were always going down.

"True enough!" was the frequent retort ; "and none sank down so fast as those who had not the spirit to hold up their heads, and put a good face upon matters, but went about as if their creditors were at their heels."

In fact, there was, about this time, a general spirit of resentment pervading the Ashley family, and finding vent in many a sharp retort ; as if, like some wounded insects, they thought they had a right to sting wherever they liked, without regard to whether it was friend or foe with whom they came in contact.

Mrs. Ashley declared it her determination that the much-talked-of connexion never should take place, even if her son could be so blind as to think of it himself, which, she often asserted, she did not believe. In short, she always concluded the thing was wrong, decidedly wrong ; and she had never been a mother to yield to anything wrong in her children.

Mrs. Norris—the busy, smiling, all-pervading Mrs. Norris—though so intimate and devoted a friend of one of the offending parties, was made no exception to those who had the pleasure of listening to the most violent explosions of Mrs. Ashley's conscientious feeling on this subject ; and there was that peculiarity in the friendship of this easy-going lady, that she *could* listen with the ut-

most composure—nay, that she could enjoy listening—so long as the abuse directed against her friends was likely to make something to expatiate upon herself, or to furnish materials for after-scenes of feeling and emotion, likely to produce a telling effect in some other circle of her intimate friends. Altogether, it was a very liberal kind of affection which this amiable lady entertained for the human family; it could take in those who were at the bitterest enmity with each other. It could hear the best abused, the worst cried up—the bitter and the sweet distributed, without regard to anything beyond the spirit or the prejudices of the speaker; it could listen to all this, and remain most charmingly unmoved itself—illustrating, in a fair and pleasing form, the very personification of human charity, and thinking itself no unlovely specimen of universal kindness and goodwill.

Admirably qualified, by these advantages, for acting the part of an universal recipient of all overcharged feelings, whether of love or hate, joy or sorrow, admiration or contempt, Mrs. Norris glided about in society, for ever gleaning where she went, and always finding choice “bits” of human life, and inimitable “studies,” to set before her friends. It is true, they passed from her hands without any artistic gloss upon them, for to give that was a little beyond her skill; but they supplied what was still better, the raw material, upon which more graphic powers could work.

Wherever, then, there appeared likely to be any great family explosion; wherever a heavy calamity seemed about to fall; wherever there was a match to be made, or an expected death to bemoan; but especially wherever there was a mystery to be revealed—there Mrs. Norris was sure to become more than usually attentive; and just in pro

portion as an important event was anticipated, was her manner intimate and confiding, and her inquiries such as were calculated to draw out intelligence from the afflicted, apprehensive, or rejoicing party.

Of course there were many calls to be made upon the Ashleys at this time, and the lady of the house declared she had never liked that pretty little woman so well before—that she found her quite sympathizing and pleasant; and, “do you know, girls,” she added in an undertone, “I don’t believe she likes that Dalrymple one shade more than we do. She only smiled, and shook her head, all the time that I was speaking of her; and you know she must be better acquainted with her, upon the whole, than we are.”

Of course, in connection with these calls, there was much for Mrs. Norris to relate to her young friend; and no doubt the point of the matter might have been found in the secret pleasure she felt in fanning on both sides a flame, which already gave promise of extending its brilliance and *éclat* far and wide amongst the social communities of M——.; for the Ashleys were a well-known family there, though engaging more of the gossip than the real friendship of any of the different parties with whom they were in the habit of visiting; while Miss Dalrymple, from a variety of causes, but chiefly her prison-visiting, had already attained the distinction of being much talked about by the same parties.

Great, then, at this time was the fund of intelligence which Mrs. Norris always took away with her from the beautiful mansion over which Mrs. Ashley presided; and first, before losing anything of its freshness or spirit, it was poured into the ear of Dorothy herself, until her bright colour would rise higher, and her eyes flash more brightly,

and her commanding figure would assume the attitude of defiance, and her young lips would utter that fearful sentence which has made so many shipwrecks on the shore of life—" *If they do not take care, they will drive me to do the very thing they so much wish to prevent.*"

Kate Staunton was, perhaps, the only person who saw with earnest and impartial eyes what was going on amongst the different parties implicated in this absorbing subject. Many might see, but very few indeed had the slightest concern about the matter beyond the curiosity it excited, or the amusement it afforded them. But Kate looked on with different feelings. She knew her cousin Frederick and his family well; and despite his worldly success, his handsome person, pleasing manners, and, above all, as a match to speculate upon, his elegant and beautiful residence now so much talked about in M——.; despite all these attractions, she could not think of him as associated for life with any woman of feeling and warmth of heart, without a sensation almost amounting to horror. "And yet," she always said to herself, when this sensation crossed her mind, "it is no business of mine, that I should meddle in it; nor, for anything that I can testify, has the lady much heart herself. In this splendid villa she will always be surrounded by beautiful things, and I have heard her declare that was her greatest object in life."

It is just possible, however, that Kate might have ventured a little beyond the bounds of her own ideas of the propriety of meddling, had not circumstances occurred about this time which so suddenly arrested the course of her own feelings and thoughts, as to throw far into the background, if not out of sight altogether, everything connected with so recent and slight an acquaintance as at present subsisted between herself and Dorothy.

From Arthur Hamilton she had heard but once since the time of his leaving M——. He was then a guest at the residence of his uncle, near Hatherstone, and suffering a very reasonable amount of anxiety for one usually so light of heart; at the idea of remaining inactive and dependent upon those whose circumstances had been considerably reduced through the ill-advised persuasions of his own father. He was then busy with various plans for the future, all equally improbable, because all requiring a large amount of capital to commence with ; and Kate had replied to the letter in her accustomed cool and rational manner, pointing out the impracticability of these plans, and strongly recommending to him some preparatory process, such as that of making himself acquainted with the details of some business or profession, before embarking in its duties, and its pecuniary liabilities. This advice she feared might be rather unpalatable ; and, therefore, it was presented in the most favourable form. She even ventured to suggest, what had for many reasons been the wish of her own heart, that he should obtain a situation in the same office with her cousin Arnold Lee, in whose more stable mind and firmer principle, she had the utmost confidence, as a means of good influence over the character of any one intimately associated with him, and especially one who, like Arthur Hamilton, had long known and valued him.

On this plan Kate was pondering one day, in the absence of her aunt and cousins at an evening party—pondering and wishing she could know the impression her letter had produced, and why it was not more speedily replied to—when, suddenly, a note was put into her hand with the well-known writing of Arthur on the cover, with no post-mark, and the word *immediate* in terrible distinctness standing out before any other.

With trembling hand Kate opened the mysterious letter, and the almost illegible contents, so far as they could be made out, more than confirmed her vague apprehensions that something fearful or calamitous must have occurred.

"Where is Jenkins?" asked Kate, after she had rung the bell with unusual violence. "Ask her to come to me directly."

"Jenkins," said she, when the woman appeared, you must obtain a carriage, and go with me immediately."

"May I ask where?" said the the woman very properly.

Kate looked again at her letter. "True, true," she said, while puzzling out some unknown address—"I think it is to Morrison's Hotel. Arthur Hamilton has written for me to go instantly."

Jenkins looked both alarmed and shocked, as well she might; and while hesitating exactly what to say, Kate spoke again.

"You are right, Jenkins, it does sound very strange; but it is to old Mr. Hamilton that I am going. I am afraid something very dreadful has happened—I am afraid he is dying."

"Suppose I go alone first," said the woman. "It is hardly a place or a time for you."

Kate wrung her hands, and walked rapidly up and down the room, but for a few moments spoke not a word. At last she said, with ghastly paleness. "It is not late, Jenkins; the place is a reputable place—I will only stay a very short time—I take you with me for protection—and, if you like, we will have a man-servant as well; but go I must, for you know the old man has neither mother, wife, nor daughter, nor any female relative that I know of."

Jenkins knew enough of the character of Kate Staunton to understand by her countenance that her resolution was formed in such a manner as not to be shaken by any persuasion of hers ; and the next thing, consequently, was so to arrange the whole matter, as to shield her as much as possible from blame. At Kate's own request, she sat down and wrote a hasty but respectful note to her mistress, in case of the family coming home before their return ; and, having taken every precaution which she could think of, while the carriage was in preparation, she set out with her trembling and almost silent companion on their strange errand.

As Kate had observed it was not then late, and with so experienced and respectable a woman as Jenkins, attended too by a man-servant who had long been a member of the household, Kate felt herself so well protected as scarcely to apprehend that she was committing any breach of propriety in what she was doing. At all events, the greater, deeper interest, converted in her mind into an absolute duty, so entirely overpowered all inferior considerations, that she thought of nothing but the terrible catastrophe which that hurried letter had indistinctly announced.

Had Kate Staunton been a heroine, she would no doubt have rushed out by herself in the dark, uncloaked, unbonneted, and in all probability unprovided even with money ; and it is because, under their deep emotions, women do so many useless and imprudent things, that the restrictions of society have to be drawn around them with a closeness which some more noble, and at the same time more reflecting natures, feel at times to be a little too severe. Were all care-takers of themselves, like Kate, how many kind things might be done which now it would be madness to attempt. For instance, Kate reflected, in

the first place, that it was an old man, not a young one, whose situation claimed her attention; and it was one whose worldly means had been entirely destroyed by a near relative of her own. She therefore went up into her own room, and carefully took out her purse, leaving still a small sum behind in case of further need, and fearing that her feelings might be so affected as to induce her to give the whole, without discretion, at one time. She then adopted those other precautions which have already been described; and all the way, while scenes of the most awful description presented themselves to her imagination, she lifted up her heart in prayer that she might be kept from weakness, and transgression of the minutest portion of God's holy law.

Kate Staunton was not a self-deceiver. She knew what she was risking, and she knew that, in the emotions which now agitated her mind, there was mixed a woman's love, almost passing the love of ordinary women. But she had been accustomed narrowly to examine her own motives; she had been accustomed to sit alone in severe judgment upon herself; and the hard and often humiliating circumstances in which she had been placed had helped to teach her many useful lessons in connection with self-knowledge. Notwithstanding all her womanly feeling, then, she was perfectly assured in her own mind that her present object was not merely to please a somewhat unreasonable and requiring lover, but to discharge the duties of that relation in which she stood with him towards his dying father, so far as they could be discharged by a short time given to investigation of his actual circumstances, and the immediate necessities which she feared might now be pressing upon him with unwonted severity.

Such being the strong conviction of her mind, Kate

Staunton was enabled to reach the place of her destination without any outburst or overflow of emotion, although the most agonising fears were mingled with what she experienced. If, however, any lighter or inferior motives had formed a portion of those which prompted her rapid and decisive movements, they would all have vanished on her first entrance into the hotel, where all was in a state of the utmost confusion—men and women hurrying to and fro, and looks of alarm and horror pervading the countenances of those who grouped together, and spoke in whispers, but could not, for some time, be got to answer in any intelligible manner, or even to attend to those who had just arrived, until Jenkins uttered the name of Hamilton, and gave them to understand that their arrival had some connexion with that party.

In an instant, the attention of one whispering and wondering group was directed to the young lady and her companion, who were ushered into the nearest habitable apartment, and told that the lady of the house would wait upon them without delay. This individual soon appeared, much disordered in her dress, and rather disposed to be familiar and hysterical, in consequence of repeated applications to certain restoratives, resorted to, as she described it, “to keep out the shock.”

“Perhaps you can show us to where Mr. Hamilton is,” said Kate, a little out of patience with the woman’s description of her own nerves.

“My dear!” exclaimed the landlady, lifting up her hands—“it’s no more fit for you than for me, to go there. I’ve been up-stairs once!” and she gesticulated as if a second time would, without doubt, put an end to her valuable existence.

“I will go and ascertain for myself,” said Jenkins; and

immediately she ascended the stairs, without being aware that her young companion was following close behind her.

There was no fear, however, from the presence of Kate Staunton, that any violent ebullition of feeling would take place, whatever the event might prove to be which had thrown the whole household into such evident consternation. With a firm step, though with a countenance as pale as ashes, she crept closely along beside the servant, until they both became aware of suppressed sounds in an adjoining chamber, to which their attention was immediately directed.

As they approached the door, which was partially open, their progress was arrested by a violent movement on the part of Jenkins. "Stand back," said she, catching at the skirts of her companion's dress, and at the same time looking down at her feet. They both perceived, at that terrible moment, that they were in danger of treading on a small stream of purple blood, which seemed gradually oozing away.

"I suppose they have been bleeding him," whispered Jenkins; but she and her companion exchanged looks which somewhat belied that supposition; and remaining for a moment in silence at the door of the chamber, they neither of them seemed to know whether to recede or advance.

Until this time, no intelligible word had broken the silence of the apartment within, though the quick movements of more than one living being indicated that transactions were going on of the utmost importance to some of the parties concerned; but now there were distinct ejaculations, and expressions of a decided and hopeless nature, as if all chance were over of accomplishing the great object upon which those earnest efforts had been employed. Unintelligible as these ejaculations were at

first, it was not long before they assumed a character sufficiently distinct ; for, in a few moments, a loud outburst of uncontrollable grief announced that one fact was now established, and that the most awful and overwhelming which the human mind is capable of conceiving.

It was impossible for Kate Staunton to remain longer without discovering herself. That piercing cry had been uttered by the voice of Arthur Hamilton ; and where and what was she, that she should not stand beside him at the terrible moment of his first anguish and desolation.

It was, indeed, a welcome sight—welcome as if some good spirit had descended from another sphere—when Kate and her attendant glided into the room ; and, instead of yielding to the impression of horror which fell upon them both at once, took their place as comforters and helpers, looking and acting with all that womanly tenderness and tact, which seems to have been given them as their essential qualification for ministering to the comfort of their fellow-creatures in the most trying moments of existence.

“ I thought you would come ! ” said Arthur, and the full burst of gratitude which followed was not less genuine, or less fresh from his heart, than the exclamations of sorrow which had so recently passed his lips.

“ Look there ! ” he continued ; and Kate turned, shuddering, to the bed, beside which a doctor was still busy, with his ineffectual efforts to restore what no human power would ever re-awaken. “ Look there ! ” Arthur continued ; and he compelled Kate to turn again to the contemplation of that awful and revolting scene, upon which it seemed as if his own eyes were rivetted, without the power to take them away.

Kate Staunton had never seen death before, except in the fair form of her own mother, where the features were

composed and lovely, and the expression that of perfect repose. She now saw the emaciated figure of a wretched old man, whose own hand had, but an hour before, accomplished an irrevocable deed, at which it might be supposed that angels were then weeping; and the human instrumentality was still so evident, in the deep yawning gash which gaped from ear to ear, in the blood which lay clotted on the floor, and in the general confusion and horror which reigned throughout the house, that the strongest nature might well have quailed under the contemplation of such a scene, associated as it was with that spirit of defiance from man against his Maker, which, in every aspect it can assume, is in itself so much more awful—so much more to be feared—than even death itself.

“And to have gone thus into the unseen world!” said Kate, but inarticulately, and only to herself. She then turned to Arthur, and endeavoured to divert his attention from the frightful spectacle, by inquiring how he had first become acquainted with his father’s return.

“By a note from himself,” replied Arthur; “so like himself—for he commenced by complaining of this wretched hotel—and yet written with so trembling a hand, that I could not help fearing either for his health or his reason, and I came to see after him myself immediately.”

“Is it possible,” said Kate, “the knowledge of his altered circumstances had come upon him too suddenly?”

“I told him all the particulars some time ago—at least, Arnold told him for me; and it was in consequence of this intelligence that he returned to England so suddenly. Still, it is possible that he never actually realised his situation, until arriving at this place. He never was accustomed to frequent this inn. The people seem to have had no knowledge of him or his connexions; and I find that,

even before my arrival, they had made some demand upon him, and, in all probability, treated him with suspicion or insult. My poor father was very peculiar. He would have borne the greatest calamity in life which had not affected his personal dignity, or his personal comforts, but touch him there, and he was weaker than any child. He appeared obtuse, insensible, or indifferent to things far off; yet sensitive, in the most painful extreme, to that which immediately affected his own personal circumstances. For this reason, I have always dreaded for him any adverse turn in these luckless speculations; but, I confess, I never dreamed of this horrible catastrophe. And now what to do, I cannot tell. I suppose I must remain here until some remittance arrive from my uncle."

"Can I write, or do anything else for you?" asked Kate.

"Yes, that you can, and do me the greatest service. I am not apt at this kind of thing; and often, when I really feel the most, a fit of folly comes over me, and I throw in some nonsense, just to keep myself from absurdity of a graver kind. Do you know, Kate, while that poor old man lies there, he seems more to me, a thousand times, than he ever was in life; and I feel myself a perfect wretch, that I ever could have neglected him as I did. But you know I never lived with him, and in my very childhood we were strangers."

"We will not enter into that now," said Kate, laying her hand affectionately upon the arm of Arthur, whose feelings had at last found vent in a violent fit of unrestrained weeping; and as she said this, she gently led him out of the gloomy chamber, and down into another apartment, where it was more suitable to converse freely, and to soothe him with those kind offices and expressions which a sister's heart would have suggested.

Whatever the natural disposition of Arthur Hamilton might be, he had enjoyed as few advantages in the way of moral training as any human being could well be the subject of; and thus, whatever he felt, if he chose to yield to it, obtained unlimited mastery over him. Whether he *chose* or not, however, had still much to do with his general conduct; and the occasional instances of self-government which he exhibited had given, both to Kate and her cousin Arnold, the utmost confidence that the good elements of his character would finally triumph over the bad.

Perhaps this conviction was never more powerfully impressed upon the mind of Kate than at the present moment, when, mingled with intense pity, it rendered him dearer to her heart, in proportion as she looked into the gloomy realities of his desolate position. All that a deep-feeling but right-minded woman could find sisterly expression for, Kate poured into his ear on that sad occasion; not forgetting, even in her sympathy and distress, that there were holier thoughts to be suggested, and deeper fountains to be sought for, than ever yet were supplied by merely human love.

And Arthur, whose mind was ever the subject of quick and transient impressions, listened to her conversation as he never had listened before. The fact was, he never had seen death before; and this close personal acquaintance with that which all acknowledge, while few actually feel that they *must know* sometime, had startled him into a sudden susceptibility on a subject too seldom present to his thoughts. Very earnest, very grave, and yet very pleasant to one heart, if not to both, was the conversation which took place on that eventful night; yet, even in the deep interest which it excited, Kate did not forget her personal duties. So soon, therefore, as her companion on their

sad errand had discharged her own share in the responsibilities of the evening, by making all necessary arrangements with the people of the house ; and by the free use of Kate's little store of hoarded money, had discharged the most pressing debts, and given references to two or three parties, especially to Arthur's uncle, Kate willingly obeyed her suggestion, that it was now time for them to depart.

"What !" exclaimed Arthur, altogether taken by surprise—"and leave me alone in this horrible place ! You have not the heart to do that, Kate, or I have greatly misunderstood you."

Alas ! for the poor girl, she endeavoured to explain, and she did so in her kindest, sweetest manner ; but her lover, never very fond of reasoning, felt only his own desolate and melancholy position, shut up with death, as he called it ; and looking upon every scruple made on the part of his friend, as a trifling and absurd punctilio, he showed but too plainly how little he valued the kindness which had already been shown, so long as it fell short of his further requirements.

"And yet," said Kate, very mildly, "I don't know but I may be turned out of doors for what I have done already."

It is possible this quiet appeal to his feelings produced a happier effect than than could have been produced by the sagest reasoning ; for, suddenly recollecting the situation of Kate in the Ashley family, he replied, "I believe you are right. No matter what becomes of me."

"Good night, then," said Kate ; "you will send a messenger to me early in the morning, and this good woman will manage to see you some time during the day."

"Good night, Kate," said Arthur, "you are well worth all the care you take of yourself, and a thousand times more than that."

CHAPTER III.



ou are well worth all the care you take of yourself!" There was no sleep for poor Kate with those hard words still sounding in her ear. Had any other person uttered them, had they been blown to her by the winds, or echoed to her by the thunder-peal, they would have been hurtless and innocent to her. But as they sounded now, from that one voice of all others in the world, there was a withering anguish in their tone; and the feeling with which Kate Staunton arose on the following morning was as if an east wind had been blowing all night upon her bare heart. Alas! for that poor orphan girl, it was her first experience of the true bitterness of woman's love, where it has been more generously, than wisely, given. And she had no sister, no brother, no friend, to whom she could appeal. In fact, it was better kept to herself—locked up within the casket of her heart—that casket which had hitherto been the receptacle of pearls, and precious records, and sweet memories to go back to in her desolate moments. It is beginning to be time that room should be made there for another kind of commodity, that the pearls should be displaced, the plea-

sant records compressed ; for, according to the accustomed lot of women thus circumstanced, it is likely that a great deal of room may be required for this new kind of treasury ; and Kate Staunton is very close, and very private here—not at all likely to ask for room in other people’s caskets when her own is too full.

This little taste of bitterness was consequently a thing aside, and kept aside with the most scrupulous care, while Kate was called down to give evidence before her aunt and cousins in full conclave, respecting her conduct of the past evening, of which, however, a note left upon her aunt’s dressing-table, had contained the first particulars ; so that the criminal had not to go back to the messenger sent by Arthur Hamilton, and thus escaped the mention of a name not quite so pleasant or easy to mention that morning as it had previously been.

It is, perhaps, not necessary to give further details of this scene than to say, that the anger and indignation of the ladies was excessive, and that they relieved their own minds in some degree by many coarse and bitter invectives against girls so lost to a sense of all propriety as to forfeit their claim to respectable society.

“I took Jenkins with me,” remonstrated Kate, “and a man-servant too. We did not remain at the hotel more than one hour, and we came back here three hours before you returned from the party. I had no wish or intention to deceive you in any respect. What I did, I did openly, and am now ready to relate to you every particular of what took place, from first to last.”

Of course the Misses Ashley did not wish to hear—not they. They declared they should blush at such a recital, and perhaps they were not used to blushing. But the mother thought she *should* like to hear ; for, on this occasion

at least, her curiosity was stronger than her tendency to blush ; and so poor Kate had to go through all her sad history, and she did so conscientiously, to those whose feelings could not go along with hers, only so far as to be naturally affected by a kind of shock, or horror, such as the reading of the same history in a newspaper would have occasioned.

Instead of this sensation producing a softening effect, however, it seemed only to stir up feelings of greater indignation against the misguided and imprudent individual who could voluntarily thrust herself into such scenes, and actually look upon a dead or dying man from choice. "It was very much the same," they said, "as going to an execution ;" and the only motive they could conceive for inducing such an act of impropriety, was one which made the case a thousand times worse, one which made them blush for the sex in general, and which, consequently, brought disgrace upon their whole household.

"Then I suppose," said Kate, whose only object was to cut the matter short, and to escape to her own room, "you would prefer that I should leave this house altogether?"

"That point admits of no question," replied Mrs. Ashley. "You have taken my servants out of the house at improper hours ; you have used liberties here which were not, and could not be stipulated for—which, in fact, no money could repay—and, above all, you have conducted yourself in such a manner as, if it were publicly known, would almost touch with reproach my own dear girls, whose spotless characters are more to me than my own life." Here, of course, Mrs. Ashley was deeply affected ; the white handkerchief was raised ; and had there been any visible tears upon her cheeks, they would have been kissed off by the five daughters at once before they

had time to fall. As it was, their kisses seemed to have something of a preventive tendency, for certainly the white handkerchief, like that of Hood's widow,

———"might have been a duster,
It was so very dry."

"Perhaps," said Kate, without anything irritating or revengeful in her tone, "you will allow me to remain in this house until a messenger can be sent to Hatherstone. I will confine myself to the chamber I have occupied, and shall quite prefer not mixing with the family."

"To Hatherstone?" exclaimed all at once.

"Yes," said Kate. "I have no where else to go; and must first know whether it is suitable to admit me there."

"Impossible!" cried the Misses Ashley. "Grandpapa is dying. You seem to have a peculiar taste for deathbed scenes."

Shocked almost beyond her power of patient endurance, Kate now assumed a more determined manner, and ringing the bell, with a strong effort, demanded of the servant who appeared, if he could obtain for her a messenger to send over to Hatherstone with the utmost speed.

"She will inevitably kill the old man," said the Misses Ashley one to another, talking at, rather than to, their cousin. "You know he is never consulted now about anything. They say he does not even know of the wretchedness and poverty of the Lees."

"I know from Mrs. Staunton herself," said Kate, "that he is much improved in health, and that great hopes are entertained of his recovery. But even if not, there is room enough at Hatherstone for me without disturbing him."

As Kate said this, a sudden gush of feeling, in spite of herself, sent the sharp burning tears into her eyes ; and, determined that there should be no triumph over her weakness, she retreated to that little chamber where some of the happiest, because the most profitable, moments of her life had been spent.

“I must leave this place, at all events,” said she, “whether I go to Hatherstone or not.” And, seizing her writing materials, she addressed a note to her never-failing friend Margaret, which was so expressed as to show the necessity of her leaving her present home, without any further explanation than was necessary for that purpose ; but while she felt that in the first hour she might enjoy of Margaret’s kind and certain sympathy, she should pour out the whole burden of her full heart before her, she had an all-pervading dread of saying or doing anything calculated to disturb the quiet which had been so strongly insisted upon as the surest means of restoration to the invalid. While, therefore, she longed inexpressibly to be admitted once more to the peaceful retirement of Hatherstone, she secretly prepared her mind for disappointment, and even employed herself, during the period of suspense, before an answer could be received, in forming plans for her own establishment in some sphere of useful occupation, where, to use her own favourite expression, she should “incur no obligation, and trouble nobody.”

All this formed a very sad train of thought to a young and almost friendless girl, who never until this moment had realized her desolate position ; and had Kate Staunton been a heroine, she would doubtless have fallen into an ecstasy of impassioned grief. But if there was one characteristic by which she was distinguished more above all others, it was health of mind, as well as body ; and

with this health there was a natural supply of hope which never failed, of honest and hearty resolution, and of many other excellent things, which the morbidly sensitive, and the pampered victims of excessive tenderness *towards themselves*, find it impossible to enjoy.

Perhaps, too, there was one prevailing cause of pain which blunted the edge of all other griefs—"You are worth all the care you take of yourself,"—those cruel words were still sounding in her ear ; and, notwithstanding all her efforts to quiet or shun their too plainly intelligible meaning, they seemed still as loud and as constantly beside her, as if a peal of bells had been ringing them in her chamber. Still, however, Kate packed on, and made herself as busy with her drawers and trunks, and her few dresses, as if she had been going a journey round the world ; not forgetting, out of her small store of treasures, to portion something out for each of the servants, and especially to remember the kind Jenkins with the richest and most costly shawl it had ever been her good fortune to possess.

Kate Staunton was sorry for once in her life that she had so few clothes, and so little property altogether, because it was too soon disposed of ; and she was not in a state to endure very patiently sitting still with nothing to do. Her books, too, which formed by far the largest portion of her worldly goods, seemed all uninteresting and unintelligible to her now—all except her Bible. But, happily for her, and for all the human race, there are few seasons of trial or affliction—few states of mind, however peculiar or complicated its feelings may be, when that blessed book cannot be looked into with interest as well as profit ; and when even a freshness, a force, and a beauty, cannot be found within its pages, beyond what the highest intercourse of human fellowship affords. Perhaps, above all,

its human sympathies affect the desolate or wounded spirit at such times ; for, let our grief be what it may, we find there, even in the early ages of the world, that the human heart was just the same as now ; and that while the outer circumstances of human life are changed, and still changing every day, the inner principles which form the life-spring of human conduct remain unaltered, ever since envy of a brother's precedence or distinction first raised the vengeance of a murderer's arm.

It was a long day for Kate to spend in such inactive and unoccupied waiting ; yet, in a great measure, reconciled by the conviction, that in remaining until the evening, as would be absolutely necessary before tidings could be obtained from Hatherstone, she should be enabled to obtain a parting interview with Mr. Ashley, whom she would have been sorry indeed to leave without some kind expression of her affection and gratitude. Her uncle, too, she believed, would be sorry to lose her presence from his household ; and this made her wish to soften to him the intelligence, that she *must* go. By a thousand little indescribable acts of kindness and attention, she had become almost necessary to his existence ; and, perhaps, entirely unknown to himself, she was, in reality, the support of many of his good but feeble resolutions. By her cheerful and attentive manner, and by her untiring, yet unobtrusive watchfulness, she had obtained a kind of mastery over him, so far as to enable him to resist some strong temptations, to which she now felt painfully that he would be cruelly exposed ; and *who* would now be near, to warn him of his danger, as she had often done, so gently, and so playfully, that he scarcely felt the remonstrance a reproof.

There is a great deal in *that*, if women would do good

to the nobler sex in the case of other relationships, as well as that of uncle and niece—there is a great deal in not *lowering* a man in his own esteem—in not striking off his dignity, even when he perversely or indolently lets it hang about him so loosely as to expose himself to public scorn—there is a great deal in gathering up the neglected garment so gently, that he knows it not—in re-clothing him, before he has become aware of his own nakedness and destitution. All this is beautifully set before the world in ten thousand different aspects, as woman's especial duty towards man—the lot she is born to, and the great part she has to act upon the stage of life. One thing, however, is universally overlooked in thus pleasantly committing gentle woman to these graceful offices as her especial calling in the world—the great question, of what she must *be herself* in her own character, habits, and constitution, before she can be brought to bear with perfect equanimity the spectacle of a high and honourable being, whom it would be the glory of her heart to reverence, as well as love, voluntarily throwing off the dignity and the beauty of his own nature, and grovelling in sloth, in vice, or in degrading self-indulgence. Surely the woman, if a wife, who can remain calm and patient, and smile sweetly, under such circumstances, must either want the feeling to understand the immensity of her degradation and her loss, or she must deserve the highest meed of praise which heroism has ever yet commanded.

Kate Staunton was, happily for her, as yet tried only with an uncle, whom she loved—and loved sincerely, for the tenderness of his warm and worthy heart, and for the principles which he had not the strength to carry out consistently, and the good purposes which he had not the power to persevere in. She loved him for all that he

might have been, and she pitied him for all that he was daily enduring ; while she saw in him only as he was, a weak well-meaning man, borne down by harsher natures ; and, instead of rousing himself to assert his right and honourable place in his own family and household, perpetually conceding for peace sake, what he knew ought not to be given up, and perpetually seeking for himself a temporary relief in what he was sure could afford him no permanent satisfaction.

All this Kate Staunton witnessed patiently, kindly ; and yet against all this she had long been struggling perseveringly, but in vain. There was no help in anything she could say or do, for one who would not help himself. It was no difficult thing to affect her uncle to tears, and he would often *weep* profusely, but he would not *resist*. It was no difficult thing to rouse his indignation against that system of expenditure, without regard to payment, which was going on his household ; and he would sometimes remonstrate with anger and bitterness, but he would not put a stop to it by any determined exercise of his own rightful authority. Thus, whatever was done by the persevering and energetic girl to build up such a character, was sure to be defeated by the first temptation, or undermined and overthrown by the first deliberate attack.

“There is nothing I can do for you now, uncle,” said Kate, that evening, after she had drawn a low stool beside him, and sat with one arm leaning on his knee, and her eyes fixed tenderly upon his face—“You will miss me sometimes, when you sit here alone after dinner, won’t you, uncle ?”

The tears which Mr. Ashley wiped away from his eyes, sufficiently attested that he would ; but he uttered not a word.

"Suppose uncle," she continued, "that instead of sitting here alone, you should go into the library, and have your coffee, and take some very pleasant book. See here, I have made out a list of some that I am sure you would like to read. Jenkins will always have them changed, and ready for you from the public-rooms. Or the daily papers—could you not have some of them here to read in an evening, just as well as elsewhere?"

"I know what you are driving at, Kate," said Mr. Ashley, slightly pushing off her arm from his knee—"You want to deprive me of my wine, and my brandy and water, at night. It won't do, Kate—it won't do. You are a child, and know nothing of the world. Besides, I have consulted Dr. Blake, and he tells me I need more wine, rather than less—good wine—something to keep the life in me; for I declare to you, that I am sometimes worn to death with these women; and the times so difficult."

As Mr Ashley said this, he struck the table with his clenched hand, in a manner quite unusual for its violence, and the next minute filling his glass, drank it off as if in defiance of his young and inexperienced adviser.

Kate again drew nearer, and bending her forehead upon the knee which had been somewhat unkindly snatched away from her, remained in deep silence for some time. Whether it was, that during those silent moments, her earnest prayers had brought down some good spirit to stand beside her, or whether the naturally gentle nature of her uncle was unable to sustain its assumed harshness for any length of time, most certainly she felt his hand laid softly and soothingly upon her head, while his tears were falling thick and fast upon her neck.

How long the two might have remained in this silent and deep communion, or in what that speechless interview

might have ended, it is impossible to say ; for before another word had been uttered, the rush of carriage wheels was heard along the sweep before the window, and, starting to her feet, Kate Staunton eagerly exclaimed, " I do believe there is the carriage come from Hatherstone ! "

It was true enough. There was the old family carriage, with the prudent, care-taking Thomas, bringing pleasant tidings of his master's amended health ; and there, too, was a kind letter from Margaret, making all things more comfortable, by an assurance that Kate had often been mentioned by her grandfather in his illness ; and that although it might be some time yet before it would be prudent to introduce her to his notice, her presence in the house would be a great satisfaction, there being many little useful services she could now perform, while Margaret herself was engaged ; and, moreover, she would be on the spot, and ready, in case she should be asked for again.

Reader, have you ever known what it was to bear, and bear on, year after year, with something almost intolerable—but which you would not give yourself leave to think so—when, suddenly, has arrived some happy moment of unexpected deliverance, and you have sprung forward, like a bird from its cage, wondering, as you did so, how that cruel imprisonment could have been endured so long ? Just so did Kate Staunton rush towards the servant who had been sent for her, and declare herself ready to accompany him at that very moment ; and if her joy was almost beyond bounds at the prospect of immediate liberation, it was not that she cared less for the uncle on whose knee she had been leaning, but that there rushed upon her at that moment such a quick and living sense of all she had suffered and borne while beneath his roof—which, to say nothing of occasional unkindness, had mingled with

it, such a constant and enduring uncongeniality—that she felt now like an inhabitant of some far-off sphere, about to spring back to her native element, and to imbibe again the genial breath of health and life.

It is true Kate felt shocked with herself for looking so evidently delighted in the presence of her uncle, whose countenance had fallen to an expression of sadness, far deeper than it usually wore. But what was to be done? She *was* glad, and she could not act a part, so there was no help for it; but still she checked her light step, which would otherwise have skipped past his door as if she trod on air; and very softly did she help to bear her trunk, treading on tip-toe, as she carried it along the hall, where the door of the dining-room stood partially open. She was determined there should be no bustle, no confusion, and no triumph at her going; and, therefore, she charged upon Jenkins that none of the other servants should be brought in to assist, or, indeed, be made acquainted with her departure, until she was actually gone, and the little memorials she had portioned out for them could be placed in their hands.

This precaution was the more necessary, because Kate Staunton knew herself to be a favourite amongst the servants, and that their quick and willing attention to her wishes, had not unfrequently called forth an excess of spleen on the part of her cousins; who always had, or fancied they had, great cause to complain of neglect and disobedience amongst their domestics, and were never, as they conceived, waited upon as they ought to be; while, on the other hand, Kate always fancied herself waited upon a great deal too much; and on the present, as on many other occasions, really preferred attending to and arranging her own affairs, without being dependent upon

help from any one, however willingly it might have been rendered.

It would, indeed, have furnished subject for much contemptuous exclamation from Mrs. Ashley and her daughters, had they seen what was going on that day; but they were dressing for an evening party at that moment; and if they heard the wheels of the carriage, in all probability they supposed it only to convey some early guest. At last, when all was ready, Kate ascended the stairs, with somewhat heavier tread, in order to pay the respect of a civil adieu to her aunt and cousins.

"I have come to tell you good news," said she, on being answered at last, after tapping some time at the door of her aunt's dressing-room.

"Good news?" said Mrs. Ashley, evidently not expecting anything good from such a quarter.

"Yes, very good," replied Kate; "I am going to Hatherstone, to remain there. The carriage has been sent for me, and I am come to say good bye."

Of course Mrs. Ashley was very much astonished, and not much disposed to believe in what she heard; or if compelled to believe, still less disposed to think that all could be right, without her own hand having moved in it. The carriage from Hatherstone, however, had so long been accustomed to bear a certain kind of authority along with the roll of its heavy wheels, and the presence of the carriage at the door being a fact attested by Jenkins and others, there seemed to be no course left for the authoritative lady, but the most unusual one of passive acquiescence; more especially as the voice of Thomas was heard calling loudly in the hall, that he had his orders to be back at a certain hour, and that it was now high time to be going; upon which announcement,

Mrs. Ashley caused a faint cold kiss to be performed upon the cheek of her niece ; and turning hastily back to her looking-glass, appeared to discharge her mind of the whole matter.

Not so the daughters, who one and all appeared to think that their cousin ought not to be let go so easily ; and accordingly rushed into their mother's dressing room, announcing, with much indignation in their voices, that Kate was actually going away.

"And with my entire approval," said Mrs. Ashley, without a moment's delay, as if determined not to leave a chance of having it supposed within her family that she had been either frustrated or forestalled in her own plans. "I have for some time been contemplating this step, and I am now gratified in my most ardent wish, that she might have the safe protection of Hatherstone to keep her under wholesome restraint."

The Misses Ashley looked at one another, but said not a word. It was not for them to suggest that their mother's steps, if this was one of them, had been taken very silently ; but they thought so, nevertheless ; and retreated to their own rooms, after they also had performed the ceremony of a farewell kiss upon the cheek of their poor cousin.

Kate had now but one more duty to perform, and that was a very hard one ; for it was to take leave of the solitary and neglected man who, scarcely even at this last moment, could realise the fact of actually parting from the only true and devoted friend whom he had in the world. Many there were who regarded him with good will, many who pitied him, many who would have helped him if they could ; but his orphan niece was the only one admitted within the secrets of his house of trial and vexation ; and

she was the only one, knowing what was transacted there, who ever sympathised with him. The rest were a party amongst themselves, and, so far from sympathising in his troubles, perplexities, and wounded feelings, they persisted in representing themselves as a party greatly aggrieved by his general conduct; until he, poor man, in time, came almost to believe that they were so, and often reproached and hated himself, that he should be such a cruel old "tyrant and niggard," as he called himself.

"Kate, Kate!" said Mr. Ashley, standing at the half open door of the dining room; "you are not going, really away?"

"Yes, I am, uncle," said Kate; "and when you think it over in your own mind to-morrow, you will see it much better that I should go."

"I shall see no such thing, child," said Mr. Ashley, and he burst into a fit of uncontrollable weeping, as he folded his niece in his arms.

"I have strict orders, sir," Thomas began again; but this time respectfully and kindly, for his heart was touched by the grief of that desolate man; and he saw not how, unless he ventured to assert his claim to be heard, that Kate would be able to extricate herself. "I have strict orders—" he continued, and, approaching nearer to the weeping girl, who was endeavouring to disengage herself from that agonizing embrace, he gently laid his hand upon her arm, and drew her away towards the carriage.

The spectacle of her uncle's drooping figure, as he turned into the vacant room again, hung long about the heart of Kate Staunton, and could not be driven away by more agreeable scenes and associations. It was a picture of abject, helpless, hopeless destitution, so forcibly con-

trasted with the lights, the costly embellishments, and the proud array of furniture, and ornament, which distinguished his dwelling, that human life could scarcely have afforded a scene more impressive to the contemplative beholder ; for what was all this to that miserable man ? Ah ! it was already too much—it was the bane of his existence—the bitterness of his cup—the poison of his food—the destroyer of his sleep—the burden of his day—the spectral phantom of his night—the grim shadow that followed him amongst the haunts of men, and pointed with its finger to the coat he could not pay for—the mocking fiend that knelt beside him in the house of prayer, and whispered in his ear—“ Look round, thou man of false pretences, thy creditors are upon thee ! ”

But we must turn away from these distressing scenes, to the more agreeable picture of Kate Staunton, once more at home within the sheltering walls of Hatherstone.

Once more at home, in the best sense of this expression, Kate was soon admitted to her former place beside her grandfather and the faithful Margaret ; and although a change, almost beyond the usual result of the lapse of time, had passed over some of the party, they were still the same in all their kindly feelings ; and more than the same, in the satisfaction with which the orphan girl was again welcomed as an inmate of that peaceful home.

CHAPTER IV.



HERE seems to be a generally-prevailing disposition to describe those moments of human life as the happiest, in which we do not think—in which we only *feel*, and *that* possibly on one subject alone. But to say that we are the happiest we can be, —when intelligence is not called forth, when judgment sleeps, but especially when conscience is not consulted, or does not approve, let the object gained be what it may, let ambition be gratified to any conceivable extent, or even let the tenderer emotions of the soul be called forth, and shed like dew upon the path of life; or let the bright sunshine of some almost worshipped luminary shine forth irradiating its dark places, and gilding afresh what was beautiful before, still if it has been this alone we have sought, and intelligence, and judgment, and conscience have not helped us in the search, we must have fallen miserably short of the highest happiness we are capable of enjoying, because the highest and noblest faculties we possess have not been exercised nor gratified in the pursuit.

There is then a simple, but highly philosophical truth, in the two great facts so often brought before the consi-

deration of mankind, as almost to weary the ear with their necessary repetition ; first, that mere personal gratification can never satisfy the soul, even though the wealth of worlds should minister to our human idol ; and, secondly, that the religion of Jesus Christ *can* satisfy the soul, even though every other enjoyment, esteemed such by the world, should be denied. The fact is, that personal gratification ministers chiefly to one faculty—self-love ; and thus, while necessarily supplying every physical, it may be also, every intellectual want, when this is made the first object of life, it leaves the highest moral faculties either unemployed, or employed in an inferior manner, so as to be made wholly subservient to the tyranny of self, a rule of government which never yet brought perfect happiness to any human being. On the other hand, the intelligent belief, the consistent practice, and the profound worship of the Christian, demand pre-eminently the exercise of the highest portion of his nature, and especially that portion to which belong all the springs of intelligent—of spiritual, enjoyment. They demand the exercise of benevolence expanding to the whole world ; a sense of right, and truth, and justice, only gratified by what is right, and true, and just ; with a profound veneration for all that is high and holy in itself ; and these enlightened by wisdom, and intelligence, and always industriously employed in searching after truth.

Philosophically speaking, and even without reference to the direct will of God, as expressed in his revealed word—simply speaking, as a child would view the whole matter, it becomes very evident that those portions of human experience can never be the happiest, in which our highest capabilities of enjoyment are not called into exercise. There may be portions which seem happy,

because of some pre-eminent and absorbing hope, or impulse, which at such a time is gratified; but in how inferior a manner the great wants of the human soul are thus supplied, let the past experience of every human being testify. We have only to look back to the fallen idol, to behold the meanness and the fragile nature of the material of which it was composed.

It is then that we begin to exclaim against the world, and against all sublunary things. It is then that we speak mournfully, and often poetically, of disappointed hopes,—of emptiness, and worthlessness, where we have looked for the sweetest flowers, and the richest fruit—of finding upon the desert shore of life nothing but

“Wrecks, and the salt surf-weeds of bitterness.”

And why! Because we have expended our all in the purchase of one good, when it might have purchased thousands—because we have risked the whole of our merchandise in one barque, and that not fitted for such a freight—because we have drawn water from one fountain only, and that a fountain which was sure to run dry.

Still it is difficult to persuade the inexperienced, in this respect, or in any other, to be made wiser by the testimony of age. The young will still go on trusting to their own hopes, and believing that in some one promised good they shall obtain their all—believing that even in their earthly pilgrimage, there will still gush forth for them, perhaps from some mountain-side inaccessible to every step but theirs, some blessed stream of which if they drink, they shall be fully and entirely satisfied. And how often, until the very last stage of decrepitude and old age, is the existence of such a stream believed in, and the place of its pleasant waters sought with unremitting eagerness!

No wonder when age and infirmity are still busy with the search, that youth should be deluded by so vain a hope. No wonder when weariness, and hate, and bitterness of soul, are digging for it in the gloomy depths of darkness and despair, that Love should flutter over them his rosy pinions, and, laughing at their fruitless labours, should exclaim—"Behold, I have found it in the flowery meadows, where I dwell. It is there that it flows at my bidding to lave the weary feet, and cool the burning lips of all who believe in me, and follow where I lead !"

As easy could it be to persuade the affrighted traveller that the thunder rolling overhead was but the humming of the drowsy bee, as to convince the ardent mind of youth that the first object of affection was not in reality this life-spring of the soul, from which all good—all happiness, was to be derived. When once the strong conviction has taken possession of the soul, that here, and here only, is perfect satisfaction to be found, all persuasion employed upon such a case is but like stubble thrown upon a fire to quench its flames ; all reasoning is but like beating the air with aimless weapons.

Happily, however, for the human race, this strange possession of the mind does not come upon it all at once ; happily there are premonitory stages of the disease in which it *is* possible both to reflect and to reason ; and when it *is* quite as easy to make choice of a safe and rational course, as under any other circumstances of life.

It was precisely in this premonitory stage of a very desperate malady, that Arnold Lee, without reflecting upon the consequences, gave up his whole heart to the pleasure of those interviews which have already been alluded to, as ostensibly devoted to lessons in the art of drawing. He had not yet advanced beyond the warning symptoms

of that which, to him as well as to other men, might become a passion—proverbially blind, and often too ardent and flattering in its promises to admit of the exercise of calm reasoning under the influence of its power, when once it has gained ascendancy over the whole mind. Was Arnold Lee to sit down and calculate the consequences of his attaching himself to the capricious and wayward girl who had already charmed his fancy? Was he to ask himself, in what respect her character was likely to harmonise with his, or in what manner they were calculated to create each other's happiness? Was he to map out a future, shared under his circumstances, with such a companion, and mark through what difficulties she would sustain him, what dangers she would assist him to avoid, and above all, how far her peculiarities of habit and temperament would hinder or promote the higher and more sacred duties of his life?

Most assuredly such would have been the secret questioning of a wise and a prudent man, in communing with his own heart under such circumstances; but we have already said that Arnold was not wiser than the rest of mankind, and that when he escaped unhurt in moments of peril, he had sometimes, like many even of the best of his fellow-creatures, more cause to thank a kind Providence for protecting him, than to congratulate himself upon the calm forethought, the self-command, or the wisdom he had exercised.

Not that Arnold Lee would thus far risk himself, where there was actual moral wrong to be avoided. In such cases, no one could be sooner awake to danger, or more immediately repelled than himself. His weakness was not there, but in a natural tendency to follow out his own will, and to persuade himself that he could accomplish

some good object by doing so. Thus, as we have already said, his dreams by day and by night embodied the idea of rescuing a noble girl from the temptations of a flattering and deceitful world, and of placing her securely under his own protection, where she would have no inducement to cultivate those superficial embellishments, which he saw plainly she was, under her present circumstances, but too likely to substitute for real and intrinsic worth. Knight-errantry had surely never a more noble design, nor benevolence a more laudable purpose. No wonder that a youth so inexperienced as Arnold, should be captivated with the charms of his own project.

And Dorothy Dalrymple—what was her purpose or design in lingering over those lessons as she did, and in making it a greater point to attend upon her drawing-master at his appointed time, than upon any of the well-dressed visitors who left their cards at her father's door? Had Dorothy any hope or design of doing good? Not a whit; but she talked very pleasantly and plausibly—yes, and she thought very pleasantly and plausibly too; for she also deceived herself, and fell into a sweet dream of some better, and nobler, and higher, kind of existence than she had hitherto experienced, or was likely to experience, in connection with such parties as she habitually associated with.

Perhaps never in her life before, had Dorothy seen so much the hollowness, the emptiness, and the utter insipidity of the conversation in which she was accustomed to take a part; and but that it had so frequently herself and her own praises for its subject, would ere this have wearied and disgusted her ear, even without the strong contrast into which it was now thrown by the frank intelligence of an unsophisticated and superior mind. Nor in

the one only charm which the conversation most familiar to her ear possessed for her, was that of Arnold Lee at all inferior ; for she herself was still the frequent theme—not praised—not flattered—no, Arnold wished to do her good ; he therefore unconsciously, and certainly without design, poured into her hungry heart the highest flattery, and offered at her vanity the richest incense, by showing her how deeply—how intensely—he was interested in her good—how entirely he believed her worth all the trouble of improving—and how supremely he regarded her happiness in all he said and did.

Ah ! is there not often a deep burning pride in the humility which receives such lectures gracefully ? Is there not often a high exultation under such reproof—a conquest gained with every fault that is brought to light ? Altogether it is for the most part a very pitiful business, when young men and young women, very pleasant to each other, pretend to do each other good ; and much is it to be regretted that it should be so. But until women can learn better to understand the workings of their own vanity, so as to distinguish *that* in all its varieties from the impulse of nobler and higher feelings ; and until men can learn better to discriminate between their love of power over others, and property in their thoughts, their confidence, and their affections, from their pure love of doing good ; it would certainly be wiser to waive the responsibility of mutual improvement between the two sexes, and at least to wait for grey hairs, and faded cheeks, to have rendered such benevolent endeavours more safe ; or for some bond of relationship to have established a less questionable right to reprove and to correct.

It is more than probable that the two individuals with whom we are just now concerned, never once cast so

much as a wandering thought upon what their mutually interesting conversation was to lead to. As two children set at liberty to enjoy a long summer-day's ramble, amuse themselves with gathering flowers by the way, with listening to the song of happy birds, or watching the variegated insects which flit around them on light and golden wings, without calculating the distance they have gone, or the termination of their path amongst the woods and meads; so the two beings who had been thus strangely thrown together, and who, though with intelligence more matured, were in their experience but children still, went rambling on through sunny realms of thought, more rich in flowers, more full of harmony, more gaily variegated, than ever were the vales of classic story, or the realms of pastoral lay. So went they on, without reflecting that the meadow, however rich in flowers, must have a boundary; the wood however melodious, must be passed through; the golden height, however glorious in sunshine, must be descended; and the regions of thought, however peopled with images of joy and beauty, must be exchanged for the stern realities of life.

In all the intercourse which had yet taken place between them the name of love had never once been mentioned, nor had any direct allusion to the subject itself been made. A third party might have been present, and could have reported nothing for the gossip of the town of M—to make a story of. Frederick Ashley himself might have listened to the conversation, nor have gathered from it anything to arrest the elaborate fitting-up of his own elegant mansion, which formed so fruitful a theme in the parties where Mrs. Norris took her accustomed place. And yet the winter was far advanced, and the embankment being in a great measure delayed until the spring,

there was more time for the drawing-lessons to proceed without interruption; and from the importance which appeared to be attached to them, one would naturally have supposed that they were proceeding with very great success, so that by the time the winter should be passed, Dorothy would be in a great measure prepared for going to Rome, in order to study and profit by the works of art in the Vatican.

Although so young in years and in experience, Dorothy Dalrymple had quick perceptions which helped her to many sage conclusions, almost without that process of reasoning which is necessary to minds of slower movement; and in her short intercourse with the world she had already clearly perceived, that amongst many admirers her real friends were but few. With a spirit beyond the ordinary endowment of her sex, she must still have been either more or less than woman, had she not been subject to moments of depression in which this great spirit gave way, and sometimes even sunk below the common level of despondency. It was then that she felt, and felt bitterly, her loneliness—her want—her destitution. It was then that she saw too clearly how small was the share which she held in the real esteem or affection of any human heart. In her girlhood she had never dreamed of this. With life, and health, and liberty, and the world before her—with that wide ocean of uncertainty in view which promised her such wealth of unfound treasures, such golden shores, such sunny sands, she had never anticipated the flagging sail, the weary oar, or the baffled helm; but even now, with her short and limited experience, the stern conviction was sometimes impressed upon her mind, that even if she *could* attain the highest eminence which human ambition ever aimed at, if she *could* stand there,

the envied of all beholders, the position itself would fail to satisfy the cravings of her soul.

Whenever this fearful apprehension arose, there invariably came with it a growing suspicion that this was not the world she had hoped to find—the world in which it was true glory to be distinguished; and just as Dorothy advanced in life towards the more matured feelings of a woman, just as she left behind the vague but ever-aspiring dreams of her childhood, just as she looked upon the social world in all its littleness, its false pretences, and its paltry aims, her spirit yearned after something still beyond—something higher, nobler, and better worth the struggle of a life. Just in proportion too, as excitement, without a sufficient or satisfying purpose brought with it the natural reaction of depressed and wearied spirits, Dorothy began to question and to feel, as a more thoughtful, and certainly a widely different being, from the wild girl who once, in her father's little garden, could be amused with the gathering together of autumn leaves.

Thus far, however, Dorothy only questioned, and thought, for herself. Fond as she had ever been of making self the subject of her conversation, and feeling self to be the first object of consideration wherever she went, she was about to demand as a sacrifice to the same idol, an offering of no less golden price than a noble human heart.

Most young ladies under Dorothy's circumstances, would have believed themselves on the very point of falling in love; and no doubt Dorothy had her own secret and shrewd suspicions that such might be the case with herself. Most assuredly she had never felt so much like it before, and the interest she took in her drawing-lessons, her eagerness to have them continued, her impatience and depression if anything occurred to interrupt them, or to

delay the coming of her instructor at the accustomed time—above all, the clearness of recollection with which she dwelt upon everything he said to her, her intense anxiety to draw him out into further communication on topics of a personal character, all these were surely symptoms of an approaching crisis in that malady which is so uniformly called *being in love*; but which, even when exhibiting all these features, and a thousand others more decisive still in their outward character, is often nothing of the kind.

Will the young reader endure for a moment a few grave hints on a subject which is too frequently placed beyond the pale of reasoning; by some parties thought too sacred, by others too trifling, by all unsuitable for the exercise of the reasoning powers? And consequently that which forms at one time or another in the experience of every human being a large portion of the business of human life—that which—above every other tendency, impulse, or passion, decides their destiny for this world, and often for the next—that which attaches them by indissoluble ties to relationship, home, and society—that which constitutes their bane or their blessing, their happiness or their misery, which enters alike into their success or their failure, and is equally capable of accelerating both—that is not to be looked into with serious eyes, but is left for the gossip of the young, the jest of the vulgar, and the scorn of the would-be-wise.

One word, therefore, of serious earnestness on this forbidden subject—one word of quiet reasoning, and of simple truth, may surely be borne with, for the sake of the variety which it presents in the accustomed mode of treating a somewhat popular theme. One word—and it is this. There are two distinct ways of becoming entangled in what is called a love-affair: there is the love

itself—a holy, and a precious thing ; and there is *the love of being loved*—a mean—a greedy—a devouring passion where it exists without the act of loving, and where it demands so costly a thing as a human heart, with all its warm and generous affections, to satisfy the hunger of a selfish vanity.

It is on these unequal grounds that the young so often mix in society, and that such fearful and fatal mistakes are consequently made. The false passion exhibits all the outward symptoms of the real one, and what renders discrimination between the two more difficult, is that it often, if not always is, in some measure mixed with it ; for to love, and not to desire to be loved in return, would be as little in accordance with reason, as with nature.

It is on these unequal, and false grounds, that women sometimes dare to marry ; and oh ! what an awakening to the truth comes then ! The devoted affection which had supplied abundant food for vanity in those circles of society where it could be exhibited as a trophy of conquest, or while the freshness of the victory enhanced its value, how does it pall and weary in the privacy of domestic life ; or perhaps if still valued for the precious incense it offers, how is it drawn upon, and drained of its sweetness, by that requiring and insatiable love of being loved, which must be fed by constant demonstrations of attachment, at once degrading to the dignity of man, and wearying to the patience of the most devoted.

It is this vanity of being loved, when mistaken for the act of loving, which makes so many fretful, teasing, and requiring wives. The character of the flirt is peculiarly marked by this propensity, and might be a warning, instead of an attraction, as it too often is, to those who compete for her favours or her smiles. The position of a flirt is

that of a person demanding of others a costly and valuable treasure, for which it is impossible that any equivalent should be returned. It is more odious even than this, for it implies the use of deep artifice to obtain by secret means, what right reason and honourable feeling would alike blush to demand openly. It implies deception too, for it makes a show of being able to return in kind, some portion at least of the treasure demanded. It promises nothing—it cannot promise; because there would be living witnesses to prove that others had shared in the same, and all would know that the heart in question, however large and bountiful, could not be bestowed upon all. No; the flirt is acquainted with a safer course than this. It is the great business of her life to find out and practise such methods of acting, speaking, and even looking, as shall convey the idea that she herself has a heart to be won, when in reality the ruling passion of her life is to win the hearts of others.

If the professed flirt were the only one addicted to this practice, or liable in this way to be deceived herself while deceiving others, there would be comparatively little mischief done to society; nor would the individual injury be such as to claim any large amount of sympathy or consideration. But the evil to be deplored is one which tries the foundation of human happiness in a widely different manner. It arises in fact out of that ignorance of themselves which is supposed necessarily to belong to the young, and which education makes no pretence to remedy. It consequently exists amongst the learned and the highly-taught according to the accustomed fashion of instruction, and influences their actions, to as great an extent as amongst the more ignorant and unenlightened.

By which of the common systems of instruction, for

instance, is a vain young girl to be made aware of the fact, that while believing herself captivated by her first love, and fancying him an object of affection, she is only captivated by his flattering attentions, and charmed with the idea of being an object of affection herself?—that she is in reality only charmed with the idea of being preferred before others; and thus the deeper the impression she has the power to make, the more ardent and devoted the attachment displayed by her lover, the greater is the gratification to her own vanity and self-love.

It is precisely this mistake, so frequently the result of pure ignorance as regards the motives, powers, and passions which habitually influence our common nature, that makes shipwreck of so large an amount of human happiness in the married state. It is the fact of entering upon that state prepared, and expecting, to *receive*; rather than to *give*—to *be* the pampered, cherished, flattered one; rather than to cherish, bear with, and, if profoundly admiring be flattering, then to flatter another.

If in the outset there should be so great a similarity in the symptoms of these two emotions, or tendencies, as to excite the inquiry—where lies the difference?—their results are so strongly marked by contradictory elements of character, as to draw out, through the whole experience of life, a set of feelings and habits entirely opposed to each other. In one case, these are greedily bent upon receiving—in the other, benevolently disposed to give out perpetually from a fountain inexhaustible as life itself. In one case there is a constant demand—in the other, a no less constant supply. In one case there is self for the centre of all good—in the other, self is forgotten in ministering to the good of a being who is more than self. In one case, kindness, attention, solicitude, are watched for,

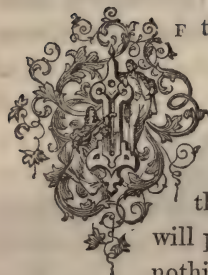
demanded as a right, and only borne without, by sorrow, reproaches; and tears; in the other they are dispensed like the sunshine and the dew—equally natural, generous, and spontaneous, but not the less essential to the verdure and the beauty of life. In one case, the insatiable receiver sits like a bloated idol on a mystic shrine, gloating over rich offerings presented there—in the other, the heart itself pours forth its secret wealth, and asks for no return beyond those of welcome and acceptance.

Just in proportion then as it is more blessed to give than to receive; and just in the same manner, is the act of loving, generously, and devotedly, superior in all the elements of true nobility and true happiness, to that common, mean, and despicable passion, which deserves no better name than a greediness for being loved; and just in proportion too, as these distinct elements of character differ from each other, is it important to learn in early life how to distinguish them each from the other, both in their outward manifestations, and in their secret influence upon the happiness or misery of life.

When education shall have mastered a few difficulties of this description, it will indeed have become worthy of its name. When educators shall have turned their attention to subjects of this nature—when they shall even have *dreamed* that it is desirable to do so—when they shall have entertained, though but a faint idea of the fact, that the springs of human conduct arise more out of this class of feelings, than out of problems in algebra, or Latin roots, or even living language in any of its varied forms, they will have advanced one step towards that blessed era when moral cultivation shall assert its claim to be regarded in connection with intellectual. Even then, the long years in which intellect alone has been the direct object of the

educator in systematic training, will have to be *recovered* by that neglected portion of our nature, out of which spring the motives of all human conduct—out of which spring happiness and misery—good and evil. All the long years in which this has been neglected will then have to be made up for by tenfold earnestness and effort, before that equal balance of mind, that harmony of character, and that consistency of action, can be looked for, which constitute man a fitting recipient for the higher influences of religion, and which, instead of frustrating the great work still remaining to be done, is like the preparation of the soil before the scattering in of precious seed.

CHAPTER V.



F the chapter just closed shall have made too large a demand upon the patience of the reader while enduring that moralising, or lecturing, as some are pleased to call it which is not always the most readable portion of a story, we will promise, by way of encouragement, that nothing of the same nature shall occur for many pages to come. We would say for many chapters, but that the story-teller needs a few resting-places now and then. Life is not all incident; it has its intervals of thought, as well as action—of feeling—of endurance; and in order to reflect, and profit by these, it is sometimes necessary to sit down as it were upon the sand-hills of the desert, and consider from what point in the horizon the journey has been made, or to what opening in the distance it is likely to lead.

From such a point of observation, dry and dusty as it might seem in itself, and unmarked by any new or interesting feature, we now return to the drawing-lessons; and wonder, whether, while they were so diligently advancing, there were no interruptions from the social habits and associations of one party, or the grave duties and sterner occupations of the other.

We have already stated that the great business of the

embankment was suspended for the winter months, so far at least as it might have required the attendance of Arnold Lee upon the shore; and, with regard to his own family, facts had recently transpired which allowed his mind a little respite from those growing cares about actual subsistence, which had for some time eaten away its peace.

It is true that Lucy Lee was still a sufferer from an almost hopeless malady; but ever since the return of Kate Staunton to Hatherstone, there had come at frequent intervals such kind and welcome remittances from Margaret, that the nursing of the anxious mother in her lonely cottage, had been greatly alleviated in its weariness and privation, by the ability to procure many of the comforts as well as the bare necessities of life. Not that Margaret even in this indulgence of her natural generosity, went at all beyond the limits of her own personal allowance. Her rule of life was one of strict integrity, and so long as it remained impossible to consult with her husband on subjects of this nature without endangering his still precarious health, she would rather have deprived herself of daily food, than have trespassed in the smallest degree upon the right, which she had always maintained that her husband held exclusively, to dispose of his own property; and especially in a case like the present instance, she repeated her frequent assertions, that she herself had no business to interfere.

A little hoard, however, Margaret had always possessed of her own, the careful savings out of her not very abundant allowance of pocket-money; and this hoard had so few demands upon it in the way of expensive personal claims, that it had often supplied the wants of the poor, without, as she said, her husband being a bit the worse. It is true she had her regular allowance for this purpose as

well, and all might easily have been placed together without infringement upon that *bit the worse* which it was so much her study to avoid; for such was the confidence of Michael Staunton in the integrity, economy, and good management of his wife, that had she chosen to do so, she might without question have made very extensive demands upon his property. But whether it was prudent provision on her part against any future investigation, or whether it really assisted towards the maintenance of that peace of mind which was her most striking characteristic, perhaps Margaret never exactly knew; it was enough for her that a habit had been early formed, and could not now without the greatest difficulty have been laid aside, of placing every item of money either received or expended to its right account, and of never trespassing upon the fund appropriated to one object for the supply of another, except only in this one instance of the overplus from her own individual wants; but even here she would no more have thought of paying herself back from her poor-box than she would have thought of robbing a neighbour's orchard.

It was from this little store then that she was able to supply a succession of trifling, but most welcome, comforts for the sick room of poor Lucy Lee, and they were accompanied by many sweet and soothing expressions, conveyed in her own simple language, and by frequent assurances that it was only because his life depended upon his mind being kept unruffled, that she dared not draw the attention of her husband to their wants so as to relieve them more effectually. All this was expressed, though in the homeliest phraseology, yet with such tenderness and sympathy, that the heart of Mrs. Lee was more sustained and comforted than it could have been by tenfold the amount of actual gifts, accompanied with less of genuine feeling.

But for this source of consolation, the coming on of that dreary winter would indeed have been a season of heaviness and gloom to one who watched the gradual fading of youthful strength and beauty, almost without a hope of its revival from that slowly wasting, but still evident, decay. Nor was the sick chamber of her daughter enlivened by that cheering hope which has so often illuminated the abode of suffering and poverty with a glory of its own, and turned the darkness there into the light of heaven and immortality.

Lucy had never been habituated to live without the regular observance of religious duties, and she would not have dared, even had she felt inclined, to dismiss the subject from her thoughts. She had always been a regular reader of her Bible, and would have been shocked to lie down to sleep without at least performing the outward act of prayer. But beyond this her heart and her thoughts had been entirely at liberty to make to themselves whatsoever idols they might choose, and to worship them too. The idol which Lucy had chosen has already been described, and if this idol was now in the smallest degree less attractive, if its glory was fading, or its form becoming stripped of its beauty, it was only as the whole world was growing more dim before her eyes, or as fever worked upon her brain and confused its many images, until each in its turn became individually less distinct. It was not—but oh! how earnestly did her mother wish it was—it was not that the glories of another world, and the peaceful submission, and holy reverence of a purer worship, were taking possession of her soul.

Although Lucy had been delicately constituted from her childhood she had never known illness before; the

bodily sufferings which she now endured were consequently as strange to her experience, as that great stroke upon her mind had been. She had experienced no discipline in early life likely to produce the result of patience under affliction. Indeed, from her extreme gentleness and beauty she had been too frequently an universal favourite, and from her pliant and docile disposition had scarcely appeared to require anything of the nature of discipline at all. But the Shepherd who sent forth such a lamb to feed upon the mountain-side, was not going to receive it back into his fold without further preparation for peace and enjoyment there. Heaven would have been no place of happiness even to so guileless, and comparatively so innocent a girl as Lucy Lee, without some chastening of a father's hand; and therefore, not only had her idol been torn away, but she had been forbidden that worship—death had forbidden it, and who should gainsay that warning—that reproving voice?

If suffering was strange to Lucy Lee, it must also be confessed that she was not altogether patient under its infliction—not so subdued, and certainly not so resigned as her more disciplined mother wished, and prayed to see her. To her it seemed hard to leave the world so young, and in such a manner too! Fond as her eye was of glancing over beautiful objects, it turned away with weariness, and often with disgust, from the meanness and poverty of everything by which she was surrounded. Her delicate hands could not touch the coverlid of the bed; her cheek could not rest upon the coarse texture of such a pillow; and though her mother with the utmost dexterity placed under both the finest cambric, rescued from the general ruin by her faithful Betsy, there was still a perpetual feeling of dissatisfaction but too evident on the face of the

invalid, even when for her mother's sake she refrained from finding fault.

And was it not natural that this should be so, for what can sustain the poor pampered child of luxury and maintain a spirit of cheerfulness under the privations of poverty, but one of these two things—either the absence of feeling, or the presence of right principle? It is not in nature to feel acutely, and not *care*; but it is in the power of right principle, supported by religious faith, so to sustain the sufferer under such circumstances, that present and inferior pain is forgotten in the contemplation of themes of higher, purer, and more enduring interest. It is not, then, that poverty and all its harsh accompaniments are disregarded, it is, and must be felt as bitter, even when acknowledged as most wholesome; but as the soldier on the eve of victory feels not the weariness of his long travel, nor stays to pluck the thorns from out his feet, nor knows, in fact, the nature of the ground on which he stands, so eager is his anticipation of that great event, so occupied his thoughts in all the circumstances which may indicate its certainty or its delay; so if the heart could once be brought to realise the paramount importance of those immortal interests which constitute the great end and purpose of human life, how little care would then be spent upon the intermediate comforts or discomforts which so often occupy the traveller on his way.

Lucy Lee was far indeed from having arrived at this stage of philosophy, as some call it, but more properly of resignation—of heart-surrender to the will of God, without question, and without reserve. To her it seemed hard to be leaving such a world, where others were still finding much to admire and enjoy; but it seemed harder still to have been forcibly driven out from those enjoy-

ments, cut off from all its costly pleasures, and cast down into deep degradation and disgrace without the least fault of hers; and once when she was complaining in this manner, her mother asked her if it would have been easier or pleasanter to her, had she been guilty?

"I should have felt it more just," replied Lucy, "and therefore less difficult to submit to."

"Ah! my child," said Mrs. Lee, "what have we to do with God's justice, or how is it possible we should understand it? The justice of man is often difficult enough, and consequently the dispensing of rewards and punishments becomes often in his hands the most flagrant and gross injustice; but the justice of God has to take into account all that must necessarily be known to the Creator and Governor of the universe, even from the foundation of the world. It has to take into account all that has ever exercised an influence upon the lives and characters of mankind, from the first principles of human action developing themselves in the conduct of a simple child, through all the great revolutions which have changed the aspect of national or social affairs. Let us never talk of God's justice then as within the limits of our comprehension, nor pronounce upon it either as violated or fulfilled in relation to any particular instance that may fall beneath our observation. Once believing it perfect and inviolable, we have nothing more to do, except to regard it as one of the high attributes of the Divine nature, whose operations are inscrutable to us. Let us rather dwell upon his mercy, and here it is, my child, that you will find the peace you so much need."

"I do need it mother," said Lucy fixing her eyes upon her mother's face. "I do need it more than you can comprehend;" and she started up from her pillow and

looked around her with an expression so wild and distracted, that Mrs. Lee for the first time felt sure there must be some hidden cause for sorrow at her heart, beyond what the altered circumstances of her family could account for.

“What is it, dear, that agitates you?” said the mother, in her softest and gentlest tone; and as she spoke, the large clear eyes of her daughter were looking full into her own, with an expression that seemed to say “I would tell you if I could.” But strength for this time failed her, and she sunk back upon her pillow so exhausted, that nothing more could be heard for some moments, but her heavy sobs, mingled with the mild soothing of her mother’s ever gentle voice.

In the mean time, great events were transpiring in connection with their family, of which the dwellers in that humble cottage had neither knowledge nor suspicion. It had never been the purpose of Arnold Lee to keep anything connected with his father entirely secret from his mother, but he wisely waited to communicate all the information, which was faithfully conveyed to him by Betsy, until the agony of suspense should have given place to certainty either of one kind or another. If the result should fulfil his most gloomy apprehensions, and the wretched man, as he expected, should take advantage of the respite and security allowed, to elude all further detection, Arnold still thought it would be kinder, for some time at least, to keep the subject from his mother’s knowledge altogether, until time should have worn out the acuteness of her sufferings, and the dreadful apprehension of his actual presence in an unrepentant state should have died entirely away. But if, on the other hand, the sanguine hopes which Betsy entertained that he

would finally deliver himself up, should be realised, although the evidence of some still remaining consciousness of rectitude which this act of justice would afford, might at some future time convey a degree of consolation to his mother's heart, her circumstances at present were such as to render it highly important that so agitating and profoundly interesting an event should not be communicated by him; and that accident should bring it before her notice in her present secluded abode appeared extremely improbable.

But beyond these considerations there was another view of the subject which Betsy consistently maintained. It was the peculiar character of her master's disposition. "If," said she, "he has all his life been giving up his time, his thoughts, his daily food, his nightly rest, the peace of his very soul, for the sake of the world's opinion, as if the world had nothing else to do but notice him, or as if he had been the only marked man in it; the less we touch him on that point the better; and the less stir we make about the matter altogether, the more likely we are to get him to confess the whole truth about that robbery and murder." For *that* after all, was the constant burden of Betsy's mind, as being the only possible chance of her brother's restoration to liberty, and, what was of infinitely more importance to her, to an unblemished character. "To catch him like a common thief," she argued, "would be a poor thing in comparison with that, and in all probability would seal his lips altogether; and then, though he might be tried for forgery, as he deserves, poor James would be no better. It is true I might myself repeat all that he told me in that churchyard, but little would the big-wigs think of that, so unlikely in itself, and from a woman too! No, no, I've had enough of them. It strikes

me their business is to make out a sort of addition sum of probabilities, and so just as it casts up, they hang a man, or let him go; and if this be the case, there would be little chance for any evidence of mine relating to that awful night in the churchyard, when, if ever in my life I believed I saw a ghost, I certainly did believe I saw one then."

Such were the arguments which Betsy had used when reasoning with Arnold against the more prompt and decisive measures which he could not but advise, as the only means for securing the guilty man, upon which any confidence could be placed; and though his own feelings would have leaned towards any chance of escape which might present itself, his sense of justice, and especially of what was due to the innocent sufferer for his father's crimes, so strongly impressed his mind, that he would not have chosen to lift a finger to facilitate the escape, under such circumstances, even of his own father.

It must be remembered too, that Mr. Lee had never been to Arnold what he had been to his daughter. No interchange of affection for years had passed between them. There was a silent reproach in the clear, upright character, and strict rectitude of his son, before which the father shrunk and writhed, until he hated him at times for the pain which this silent testimony to the superiority of right principle inflicted on his own deceitful, grovelling, and miserable mind. Arnold felt this, though he studied carefully, and chiefly for his mother's sake, never to betray that he did so, and still less to resent it; but to have really loved his father under such circumstances continued almost from childhood, without any intervals of tenderness, would indeed have been beyond nature, as it would have been for a youth of Arnold's character to esteem, respect, or reverence, a man like

Mr. Lee. A long continued task of duty was all which Arnold had set before him in relation to his father, and this he would not willingly have neglected, so long as his mother's eye was upon him, and her example before his view; for in this respect her own patient walk was so perfect and undeviating, that merely to reflect upon what she must have to endure and smother down, in order to maintain so quiet and yet firm a course, was in itself a sufficient incentive to inspire a wish on the part of her devoted son to follow in the same guarded steps.

With the natural dread which Arnold entertained of the feelings and principles which had hitherto influenced his father's conduct, and the knowledge that they had habitually prompted him to make his own purposes the chief, and in fact the only, objects of consideration; he was altogether unable to share the confidence of Betsy Burton, when she repaired to that rendezvous in the churchyard which had been appointed by the wretched man himself, as the place where he promised to disclose his decision with regard to the course of conduct he intended to pursue.

When Betsy had returned from this interview it was but too evident it had not been altogether satisfactory, for her open brow was clouded, and her lips, on most occasions so fluent and so quick to tell, seemed closed upon all which had transpired. Arnold naturally began to fear. Indeed he had scarcely even dared to hope that the stirrings of a long hardened conscience could be sufficiently powerful to inspire an act of self-sacrifice, where self-gratification had been the ruling passion of a whole life.

It was evident too that Betsy was perplexed, that her natural and seldom failing skill in devising means and resources was at fault; and at last, unable longer to keep silence, she said to Arnold, one day when happening to

meet with him alone, "I want a friend, dear—a powerful, influential friend; do you think you can help me to one?"

"What is your difficulty, Betsy?" enquired Arnold.

"Difficulty, indeed!" said she, finding a sudden relief in the setting loose of her powers of speech, "After all, he won't give himself up, unless I so manage it that there shall be no noise about the matter, no stir in the place, no hooting in the streets: poor soul! for he seems even now to think more of this, than of the shouting and acclamation of bad spirits in hell. However, the great point lies here—whether I can make friends with some magistrate, perhaps, or some man in power, so to arrange the matter that he shall be got quietly away; for if they rush upon him unawares, he has those pistols in his bosom, and that horrid poison close beside his mouth. He's a desperate man as ever I held parley with, and I don't know but I got a fright myself, the last time I met him in that lonely place. It's altogether a different thing when one's spirit is up to the mark; and the courage that holds out at one time may play one false another, you know. But, as I said before, the great point is to get the ear of some great man. I've thought of the county member, myself. What do you think?"

Knowing the character of the county member as a gay young sportsman, Arnold could scarcely forbear a smile at this suggestion, only that the subject itself was too serious and too important to admit of a moment's trifling; and perhaps he never, since the calamities which had overwhelmed his family, had regretted so much as at this moment, his own total exclusion from those respectable and influential parties who might have essentially aided him under the present difficulty. Involuntarily Arnold glanced at his own coat, already much worn, and in places

almost threadbare; and while he did so, the conviction flashed across his mind, that, let him assume what dignity he would, or let his conversation and bearing be ever so conformable to the usages of good society, the more it was so, perhaps, the worse for him; inasmuch as the suspicion would be stronger that he must have disgraced himself the more deeply, to have fallen from the polished circles of life to the immeasurable degradation of a threadbare coat. A working man presenting himself in such a dress, would have excited no feeling of apprehension, but a young man, with the speech and bearing of a gentleman!—above all, with the *spirit* of a gentleman, which Arnold felt that he had—why he might be surprised in a moment into what would be regarded as the most glaring and gross audacity, in connection with such a coat.

With these considerations, Arnold felt too, that his own high spirit was not sufficiently subdued to enable him to bear the treatment he should be likely to meet with in presenting so extraordinary a request in favour of his own father; and, under circumstances of so delicate a nature, he saw clearly that his own agency might frustrate, rather than help forward, the object which it was so desirable to secure.

“I see,” said he, after considering a few moments, “that I am not the right person to move in this matter, and the question next occurs—Who is?”

Betsy Burton threw her head a few inches further back at this strange questioning. With regard to the person who was to be the *actor* in the business, *she* had never entertained a moment's doubt. The where to go, and what to do, were the only questions which had puzzled her; and the starting of this new difficulty appeared not exactly to commend itself to her taste.

"Humph!" said she, "as to that, I should have thought those who had carried the business on so far, would be most likely to work it through."

"Don't be offended, Betsy;" said Arnold. "I did not, I could not mean the slightest disrespect to you; but, I assure you, I feel myself just now in such a strait, I know not which way to look for help, and it seems to me the question itself is of such importance, that we ought to set aside all other considerations than just the thing we have to do, and the most effectual manner of doing it. I myself have been thinking, if Miss Dalrymple would use her interest—"

If Arnold blushed slightly, and hesitated a little, as he said this, he would have blushed and hesitated a great deal more, had he apprehended the outburst of astonishment and indignation which such a suggestion was calculated to call forth.

"Dalrymple, indeed!" exclaimed Betsy—the name was enough. "What?" she continued, "and bring about your ears that hornet's nest, with Mrs. Norris at the head of them? We had better hire the bellman at once, and tell the whole town about it."

"But Miss Dalrymple," interposed Arnold, "has nothing to do with your hornets, as you call them."

"Hasn't she?" responded Betsy, with a peculiar tone of voice which implied many unutterable things. "Miss Dalrymple is all very well," she added, "if you want a play acted, or anything got up to make a noise about, and I don't say but what she may be clever enough in her way; but of all the women upon earth—I beg your pardon—*ladies* I mean; she is the last *I* would choose to transact any private business of my own that wanted doing in a quiet manner."

"I don't think you quite understand Miss Dalrymple," observed Arnold, rather shortly.

"May be not—may be not, Mr. Arnold!" said Betsy. "I should like to see the person that does understand her." And Arnold, in all probability, responded with a mental—"So should I."

At present, however, he was compelled to turn from this discussion, interesting as it might be, to the consideration of graver themes; and it was agreed upon at last, though very reluctantly on Betsy's part, that Dorothy should be requested to lay the case before Mr. Norris, whose office, as a magistrate, rendered him the most likely to be an effectual help, amongst the small circle of their friends.

This, Dorothy undertook to accomplish privately; and, by an ingenious device practised upon her dear friend Mrs. Norris to draw her entirely out of the way, she might have effected her purpose, but for the extreme vigilance on the part of some *dear* and *intimate* friends, lest another party, even a husband, or a wife, should be admitted to the same degree of intimacy as themselves.

On the present occasion, nothing could have shaken the tender attachment of Mrs. Norris towards her young friend, equal to the knowledge that she communicated in a private manner with the being, who, in one sense at least, formed the *study* of her life. All other offences would have been mitigated by her affection, but this was only increased; for how could a friend so tenderly beloved, withhold from her any intelligence sufficiently important to be communicated to her husband?

Nor was Dorothy Dalrymple sufficiently acquainted with the world to be aware what a breach of good faith she was committing in seeking a private interview with

the husband of her friend. Intent upon one object, and profoundly interested in the account which Arnold had given her of the present situation of his father; proud, too, of being thus far admitted to his confidence, and flattered by being entrusted with the management of so important and yet delicate an affair, Dorothy had never felt so *great* in her whole life, and scarcely ever so happy, as when, after appointing to meet Mrs. Norris at a fashionable rendezvous that morning, and knowing the good-nature with which her friend would linger about, scarcely impatient at her delay, she turned her steps in an opposite direction, and hastened, with the utmost speed that public appearance would permit, to the residence of the magistrate, at an hour when she knew he was always to be found at home.

In asking for Mr. Norris, the servant could scarcely be made to understand that it was the gentleman, and not the lady, whose presence was desired; but Dorothy, urged on by the direct and pressing nature of her purpose, pushed hastily past the astonished footman, and with her own hand knocked sharply at the door of the magistrate's private room.

"Has anything happened to my wife?" asked the stout gentleman, observing the eager manner of his visitor, and surprised at the appearance of one whom he regarded very much as the shadow of that wife, now entering his room, without the substance.

Dorothy, however, soon set his mind at rest on that head; and she entered so warmly and so eloquently into the subject of her visit, that the worthy magistrate was too completely confounded by the number and variety of her arguments, pleadings, and assertions, to gather for some length of time, a single clear idea upon which to turn his majestic mind.

At last the plain fact of a great villain being in the neighbourhood, within the very grasp of the law, became evident to the man of influence, and he sate no longer at ease in his chair, but rose up, and confronted the fair speaker as if she had herself been the culprit, and he the concentrated power of a whole code of laws.

It was very difficult for Dorothy, with all her eager calculating, her many quick perceptions of chances and changes, and the rapid thoughts which shot through her mind with lightning-flashes, to deal with a mass of matter like that which now stood before her, actuated only by one idea—that of having the criminal seized instantler, brought to judgment, and condemned—it was very difficult to make such a person understand that quietness, secrecy, and even delay, were absolutely necessary ; but it was still more difficult, nay, absolutely impossible, to make him see, that it would in any respect be better, could the criminal be prevailed upon to make a voluntary surrender of himself, accompanied by penitence and confession, than were he to be forcibly secured, or artfully entrapped against his will. Of the two alternatives, indeed, Mr. Norris preferred the latter, as showing more clearly the tremendous power and majesty of the law, and, therefore, exhibiting before the world that wholesome and terrific spectacle of the guilty being certainly secured, which is generally thought to be so advantageous to the well-being of society. The higher power of that moral law which would, in the first instance, have prevented the crime altogether ; and in the second, would have brought it to light through the agency of a guilty conscience, and a penitent heart, was as incomprehensible to the mind of Mr. Norris, as if it had now for the first time in his life been described to him in an unknown tongue.

Dorothy Dalrymple saw plainly the peril in which she had placed her cause, by laying it before one who could not comprehend it, and she trembled for the result; for already Mr. Norris had seized the bell with a determination to put in force that agency which he deemed it his bounden duty to employ without delay. His mind was made up, whatever his visitor's might be; only that she sprung across the room, and seizing his powerful arm, implored him with such energy to wait until she had further explained herself, that for a moment longer he paused; and it was during this fearful suspense, while Dorothy yet clung to his arm, and looked up into his face with her eloquent eyes, speaking at the same time in a tone of such earnest entreaty that she scarcely knew what her lips were uttering—it was at this critical moment that the rustling of silks was heard, and that a vision dawned upon them, which might have been lovely and beaming, but for the passion darting from a pair of sparkling eyes, perhaps never before either so bright, or so expressive.

We will not repeat the words which even a *lady* can utter when labouring under a paroxysm of jealous rage. The mere phraseology of the passion may vary under different circumstances, but the taunting, the bitterness, and the vehemence, are pretty much the same under all.

Dorothy Dalrymple was not a person to be cowed by an explosion of this nature. Her towering spirit rose above the storm, and she absolutely laughed in the face of her friend, at the absurdity of her accumulated accusations.

Not so the magistrate. He had heard the same tempest before, and *he* knew, though perhaps no one else did, that the fair and smiling countenance of his wife, and the voice which, in company, was so sweetly toned, and softly

modulated, could both be made to express what he was sometimes fain to escape from, by bolting the door of this his private room.

It was evident that the large man was absolutely terrified; though deriving considerable support from the spirit manifested by his unfortunate guest, who still maintained her ground, and parried all the attacks of her irritated friend in a manner which indicated but little probability that her courage was likely to be subdued.

And all the while there was pending between heaven and earth, the great transaction of a guilty soul wrestling with its own convictions, and tried by the touch of mercy extended to it for the last—last time. Many a miserable hour had that grovelling half-penitent endured beneath the moon and stars, with no human eye to witness his anguish and prostration; and one child-like tear of actual penitence—one prayer, sincere and earnest, might have saved him!

It is strange to turn away, even if only in idea, at once from the littleness, and the frivolity of the dancing feathers which float upon the surface of society, and which occupy the busy thousands fluttering there—it is strange to turn away at once from scenes like these, to those great and momentous events perpetually going on around us, which have to do with the condition of the immortal soul before its Maker—which have to do with the rebellion, the defiance, the obduracy of the soul, even upon the very confines of eternity; or, on the other hand, with its child-like submission, its humility, its penitence, its fervent breathing of the prayer—*Thy will be done.*

CHAPTER VI.



IT may readily be supposed that a crisis was approaching in the Ashley family, requiring all the good management of the lady of the house to conduct herself and her daughters through, with their accustomed dignity, and immaculate propriety. Wherever there has been a long-continued system of dressing, and visiting, and party-going, in connection with deteriorating pecuniary circumstances, the world *will* blame, though doing precisely the same thing itself. Mrs. Ashley knew this, and she prepared for it accordingly.

She prepared for it, and had been preparing for it during years of trial and perplexity, by eloquent and touching appeals to the sympathy of her friends; and by the most plaintive insinuations about the inconsistency of *some persons*—their vacillation of character—their indifference to the exigencies of the moment—their habit of letting things go, to the unspeakable injury of their families—their unwillingness to be told of their faults—their jealousy of all interference on the part of the innocent sufferers themselves—and here the white handkerchief was always applied with great effect, until half the morning callers on Mrs. Ashley and her daughters, and more than half their evening visitors, went away, believing that if ever there was a woman to be pitied in the world, that

woman was the excellent wife of Mr. Ashley—the devoted and self-denying mother of his accomplished daughters.

It is quite possible that a few—a very few—of those admiring visitors did question now and then within themselves to the following effect—if Mr. Ashley was in reality neglecting his business, and ruining his family at such a rate, why all this party-going—this display—these constant improvements going on about the family mansion—this evident desire to make it the most splendid and elegant abode in all the neighbourhood? But these rude questionings were always speedily silenced by one or other of two important considerations—first, a little conscience on the part of the questioner, who in all probability was carrying on precisely the same kind of system; and secondly, a little self-interest, for the Ashley parties were often very pleasant, and it was generally believed they were in a condition to give parties for a long time to come. The season had consequently not arrived when they were to be openly reflected upon. That season would be when they should have failed, and had become unable to give parties any more. *Then* the questioners would have at them indeed; but at present it behoved them to be respectful and complacent, for were they not still on visiting terms? Oh beautiful friendship and pleasant interchange of social visiting! who would not expend a fortune in procuring the distinction of standing at the head of it?

Thus far then all went smoothly between Mrs. Ashley and her numerous and admiring guests. All went smoothly too between the mother and her five daughters, because they were all on the same side. All did not go so smoothly however, with the nominal master of the household, because he stood alone, and saw things differently from the

other members of his family—saw clearly, and with agonising truth of vision, to what their present course must lead ; but still he looked on without the power or the determination to act.

There are some natures that become too much hurt and grieved by what is wrong, when connected with those whom they love, to feel properly indignant ; and Mr. Ashley's character was one of these. He could never battle for his rights when disputed by his own family ; but he could feel sore and injured while resigning them ; and sometimes this very soreness and sense of injury grew almost into madness, and he became for a moment capable of the most violent effort, or the most desperate act ; but always on the next, overwhelmed with regret and shame at his own passionate extravagance, and subdued to the weakness of a child, under a conviction of his own harshness or injustice.

Under these fits of passionate excitement, poor Mr. Ashley was treated by his family as if he had been a wild beast, until he almost learned to think he was one—he, who would not have ruffled the feather of a sleeping bird ! And it was chiefly these rare occasions which formed the foundation of that secret sorrow, which, as Mrs. Ashley gave it out, was preying upon her mind, to the injury of her valuable health—"and if," she would say, "I *should* fall a sacrifice at last, and be actually called away from my beloved children !"—Mrs. Ashley was as incapable of concluding that awful sentence, as the whole world would be of filling up the void to which she faintly, but affectingly, alluded.

Yes, the weight of his circumstances did fall very heavily upon Mr. Ashley, because he dwelt alone. And yet he was a peculiarly social and kindly-feeling man—

one to whom the face of a friend, and the tone of cordial greeting, were always peculiarly welcome; yet alone he dwelt in the midst of numbers, because he could not speak of his circumstances without sinking altogether—he could not speak of his family, without drawing down condemnation upon those whom he felt bound to protect from every description of harm. Thus he dwelt alone at that old office—that now dark den of accumulated suffering, where, in all probability, his father's brightest and most ambitious hopes had found sustenance, and had flourished. He dwelt alone when he broke the seals of those unending applications for money—all *due*—that was the worst of it; except that now and then, as if in mockery of his own emptiness of all resources, there came a letter from a widow, pleading for a pittance towards her son's establishment, or a long subscription-list for some far-off charity, or an announcement that certain parties would call for the purpose of paying Mr. Ashley the high compliment of placing his own name first among the liberal patrons of some benevolent institution. All these agreeable and appropriate communications, the solitary man was accustomed to deal with alone; and alone to look out of the dark dingy window of his up-stairs room—once his proud parents' sitting-room—out upon the heavy waggons, trucks, and bales of merchandise, which passed below, and which seemed destined to carry wealth to every hand but his. But worse than all, it was alone that he returned to his home, and trod the stairs of his great mansion with a step so lonely and untended, that it seemed to find no echo there. Alone—for any heart-communion which ever passed between him and the other members of his family—alone he sat at his own table, dizzy with glittering lights, and sick with costly food. Alone too, he was left

in his accustomed place, and then the laughter and the noise in the drawing-room announced that others found companionship, though he had none—alone in those half-dreamy musings, when strong temptation was at hand, and when no kind communicative voice came near to beguile him of his weary thoughts, and to teach him that there might be stimulus more pleasant than that, which, as he took it, only seemed to make the throbbing of his heart and brain like peals of muffled bells—still heard—still felt—but no longer heard and felt each in its individual tone—each in its distinct acuteness.

No kind voice came near him now that Kate was gone; and the very loneliness by which he was surrounded became intolerable to him. He thought of his wife, and children, as he was accustomed to think of them, as a *party*, feeling, thinking, and acting together. He had good cause to think of them in such a manner; but now he thought of them individually. He thought of his children in their infancy, and a strange fancy took possession of his brain, that if he could appeal to them one at a time, and separate from the rest, possibly some impression might be made upon them. Not that he could have defined to himself the precise thing which he wished, or wanted to impress; but his heart was yearning for a little kindly fellowship, and he could not bring himself to think it was entirely wanting towards himself, when he every day beheld so much appearance of it lavished upon their other parent. His heart was sore, too, with the conduct of his son, now almost entirely estranged from his family, and wholly from himself; so that not even a line of condolence had been returned to a long letter he had lately sent him, not asking for assistance, but merely stating the stern fact of his many and extreme

difficulties. And all the while the villa which his son was fitting up, formed one of the choice themes of conversation in the parties of the town of M—, and people vied with each other in having seen it under improved circumstances—one with the portico completed, another with the cornice in the drawing-room filled up; and the father was congratulated wherever he went upon the inimitable taste, success, and general desirability of such a son. Had that son spared half, or all his fortune, and his leisure time in assisting his father, and had dwelt the while in an humble tenement himself, how little would the parties in the town of M— have cared to hear about him then, or to look in upon his domestic arrangements!

“I will try them one by one;” said the half-dreaming father, and he counted his five daughters by their names, down to the youngest, without a gleam of hope. “I will try little Loo,” he concluded. “She was but a child the other day. Surely her heart has not had time to become hard like her brother’s. It seems to me scarcely twelve-months since she had that fever and was so glad to be carried in my arms, and to lay her head upon my shoulder, then. I will *try* little Loo.”

Now the said Loo, so called by way of endearment, for all Mr. Ashley’s children were very dear, had been christened after that pattern of perfection, Lucilla, in a well-known novel, which about the time of her birth, had run its course of popularity; and as all allow there is a good deal in a name, the fond mother no doubt concluded with her accustomed sagacity, that this would prove no inconsiderable aid to the development of so much of the family excellence as might be centred in the little being so advantageously ushered into the world. Lucilla proved to be the youngest, and was consequently the

identical being upon whose head was thrust all the unbecoming bonnets not wished for by the other sisters, for the purpose of shewing that they *would not do*, and upon whose person was thrown all the unsatisfactory dresses for the purpose of proving that they were no longer wearable, and being so, that others must positively be obtained. It happened, too, that the individual block was singularly plain-looking, with at all times a low average of amiability, but on such occasions something less than that; so that the experiments upon the whole were completely successful—the proof beyond dispute.

“I want you, my little Loo,” said Mr. Ashley, as his daughter, who had been sent for, entered the room. “I want you to come and sit beside me, as your cousin Kate used to do sometimes.”

The girl had stood bolt upright before her father, and she now begged to know on which chair her cousin Kate had sat, that she might take the same; and if her papa would please to indicate the exact part of the chair so privileged, she might perhaps be able to adapt herself to his wishes.

“Now don’t be foolish, Loo;” said her father very patiently. “I want to talk with you about some of our family matters.”

“The very thing,” replied the girl, “mamma is dying to talk with you about; and here we all are, shut out from your confidence, and not knowing what to do, nor what is before us.”

“I tell you, child,” said the father, with a little less patience than before, “I sent for you for the express purpose of talking with you—of opening my heart to you if you would let me.”

“And I tell you, replied the young lady, “that I don’t

wish to be admitted to secrets from which mamma is shut out. I know my duty better than that. Mamma has not taught us in vain what we ought to do ; and if you had only been open, and honest, and straight-forward with your family, in all probability the difficulties you so often allude to, might have been avoided."

Mr. Ashley filled up his glass, and drank it off. The colour was rising to his forehead, and the tenderness with which he would have met his child, seemed all sent back to curdle round his heart. His daughter still sat bolt upright on the front of the chair which he had drawn near him when inviting her to sit down ; and, in the irritation of the moment, he could almost have set his foot against the chair, and sent it and her together to the opposite side of the room. But he was too much accustomed to this kind of thing, and too entirely borne down by numbers, whenever he did assume anything like mastery, not to know that it would be as unproductive of any good results on the present occasion, as it had always been before. He therefore merely rubbed his hand on his hot forehead, ran his fingers through his thin grey hair, setting it all on end as if to cool his brain ; and once more filling and emptying his glass, turned more calmly to his daughter.

"Go," said he, "and tell that excellent mother of yours, and tell your amiable sisters—tell them all, that I shall call my creditors together in three days from this time, and that they must all look out for themselves."

It is quite possible for a young lady to walk out of a room with a back as expressive of irritated feeling as her face ; and in this manner the gentle Loo departed from her father's presence, not deigning to reply to the audacious truth which he had presumed to utter in her hearing,

and more audaciously had embodied in a message to ears more august than her own.

Great was the indignation, and, it must be confessed, great the consternation too, when the message was delivered in the adjoining drawing-room—was it reality, or was it merely a threat?

“Do go, Charlotte,” said one terrified sister, “and ask papa if he really knows or means what he has said?”

“Not I indeed,” replied Charlotte; and the whole conclave were of opinion, that if he was only practising upon their fears, he would be *too much gratified* by finding they had taken the matter up seriously.

“Notwithstanding,” said Mrs. Ashley, and she spoke oracularly, until the white handkerchief began to be applied—“notwithstanding there may be some influence attributable to the after-dinner state of your papa, and I regret to think how much! I have, from other causes, strong reason to fear, that in consequence of long, and with such a family, *unpardonable* neglect, your father’s affairs have fallen into a very discouraging, I might almost say, a hopeless condition. How I have myself laboured in secret to rouse him from this lethargy—this torpor, no words can tell. The heart alone knoweth its own bitterness. How I have myself striven to meet our pressing difficulties, it would be equally impossible to explain. Young as you are, however, you must all know that let the ladies in a family do what they will, so long as the individual who has the management of their business affairs is without energy—without application—without business talents, and unwilling to be advised by those who have, the peace and prosperity of that family must be in a very precarious condition. Upon myself, however, there has been settled—” and here the lady

raised her eyes, and uttered an ejaculation expressive of reverend gratitude, which it is not necessary to repeat—"has been settled" she continued, "a small pittance, of which no one can deprive me, and with you, my beloved children, it is the dearest wish of my heart to share this scanty mite. Perhaps we may obtain bread—perhaps your mother may be kept from absolute starvation!"

Here the grand oration of the afflicted parent was interrupted by the audible sobs of her five daughters, who clung around her in every conceivable attitude, expressive of the most devoted and self-denying attachment. It was not Niobe weeping for her children, but her children weeping for Niobe, supporting her in their arms, and forming altogether a most lovely and classical group.

It is scarcely in keeping with the picturesque, and poetical effect of this scene, to relate what turn the communion between the lady and her daughters had taken before the lapse of half-an-hour; but as the best mothers are those who beautifully combine a constant reference to the higher elements of human nature, with its wants, and even its bodily requirements, so this admirable woman on the present occasion indulged not too long her own fine sensibilities, but turned with a tact peculiar to herself, to the pressing emergency which appeared likely to threaten the peace and the welfare of her tender offspring. With the same tact also, she endeavoured, not unsuccessfully, to turn away their thoughts, as well as her own, from subjects too painfully affecting, and from sensibilities too acute to be safely yielded to. From such channels she prudently directed them to considerations of personal moment, not by any means the less interesting, for being personal, and in the course of an entire hour, the mother and her daughters were as busy, as even her heart could

desire, in calculating the practical and probable means of escaping some of the most fearful consequences of a public failure.

One of these consequences, as the world regards them, every body knows to be, the fact of the family having nothing left for themselves. No matter who loses by the failure—who is ruined and left destitute, if only *they are not*—if only they are left in a condition to occupy a good house still, to obtain credit again, and altogether to hold their heads up in the world. This then was the great point to which all the cleverness of Mrs. Ashley was directed—not for herself. Oh, no! she, dear disinterested soul, could live on bread and water, she should *prefer* it as her daily food under such circumstances, if her children would but let her live so; but it was for *them* that she thought, calculated, laboured, night and day. *Her* prospects in the world had long been blighted; but for *them* she was not prepared to sink altogether: she could not say that she was.

And thus it was that business of a very active and stirring nature began to be transacted within the walls of the Ashley mansion. For some time it had been the practice with the ladies of the family to seek out new tradesmen in the town of M——, on whom to bestow the favour of their custom; and there had lately been opened in the same town a very magnificent establishment, where it was an object of no trifling importance to have a carriage with liveried footmen standing before their giant windows; and here Mrs. Ashley, with her two daughters, determined on the following morning to go.

It was of very little consequence in this establishment how many things were sent out for inspection, the people had nothing else to do; neither was it of



much consequence, on the other side, to the ladies of the Ashley family, how many purchases they made. People can buy very largely where nothing has to be paid for. Consequently, there was altogether a very splendid display that morning in the drawing-room at the Ashley's, the lady of the house enthroned in the midst, passing her judgment upon shawls, and silks, and other articles of apparel, in every possible variety of texture, and shade of colour; while the younger ladies snatched out, and fitted on, and held up to the best light, whatever commended itself for a moment to their taste.

It was altogether a very animated and busy scene, and lasted so long, that callers had to be shown into another apartment, for, as before observed, there was a great deal to decide upon and purchase where nothing had to be paid for; and, consequently, the business transacted occupied an unusual length of time, for the master of the elegant establishment was only too happy to offer his valuable goods to the acceptance of Mrs. Ashley, and had even attended upon the lady in his own person, by way of paying her the greatest respect. As he did so, however, his eye glanced eagerly around the room, and made many minute and searching observations upon the mansion altogether; for he was not without feeling in the secret of his heart, some slight misgiving as to payment being made in full, or only according to the plan of dividing, which some parties appear so greatly to prefer; though this preference must certainly be allowed to rest exclusively with those who *have to pay*.

Upon the whole, the ladies of the Ashley family were so agreeably occupied that they were scarcely aware of the lapse of time, and still less aware what sounds were heard in other parts of the mansion, or who arrived,

except as their names were announced by the servant in attendance. All, therefore, were too deeply absorbed to know that the step of the master of the house was in the hall, or that he was actually within the sound of their animated voices, until he had stood some minutes at the entrance of the drawing-room, watching intently what was being transacted there, and becoming each moment more indignant at the nature and the spirit of the scene which was a little too intelligible to his accustomed eye.

At last, with one of those sudden impulses by which Mr. Ashley was sometimes actuated, he walked in amongst the scattered heaps of merchandise, and, addressing himself directly to the owner of the property, uttered these daring and never-to-be-forgotten words—"Take away your goods—take every article away. I will not be answerable for the payment of one; and these ladies know moreover that I *cannot* pay for them. Begone then, as quickly as you came!"

What more Mr. Ashley might have said must remain for ever unrevealed; for what with the half-suppressed shrieks of the ladies, the sobs hysterical and indignant, and the quick but determined packing-up of the owner of the goods, a scene ensued which could only be heightened by one circumstance, and that was consummated in the entrance of Mrs. Norris, who, unknown to the parties most concerned, remained for some moments a wondering but deeply-interested spectator.

CHAPTER VII.



ow many faults has friendship to bear the blame of, besides those which belong exclusively and properly to itself. If the world could only be brought to call things by their proper names, this would no longer be the case. Friendship would then be restricted to instances of real attachment and affection, and as such might well bear all its faults upon its own head.

As it is, and according to the accustomed phraseology of mankind, friendship seems to be a word of universal application, wherever two or more persons are in the habit of talking, visiting, or otherwise communicating on familiar terms; nor would this misapplication of the word be of the slightest consequence, but that it leads very naturally to a general conclusion, that parties thus united, or rather associated, should fulfil, towards each other, all the relative duties which friendship enjoins—should in fact be both true and tender to each other, kind in bearing with mutual faults, and patient in listening to explanations, where appearances wear an unfavourable aspect. That *real* friendship should ever be found deficient here, is more than can be believed; but the mischief is, that when associations for mere gossip, for self-interest, for distinction, or for any other personal object, are violently broken

up by the failure of that object, or by any other unworthy cause, poor friendship is cried out upon, the world is set at nought, and poets and moralists make themselves busy with the theme, inveighing against the treacherous and uncertain nature of all earthly attachments.

And all the while, in at least ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, where friendship is said to have failed, it is only self-love that has been disappointed, vanity that has been piqued, or the passion for excitement which has ceased to be gratified. When, therefore, we shall have made that great step in moral progress which consists in calling things by their proper names, we shall speak, perhaps, of forming a *selfship* with a lady, or even a gentleman, whose interests can be mutually served with our own by entering into such a compact; and by the simple use of such a word, we shall avoid innumerable mistakes and disappointments.

Had Dorothy Dalrymple and Mrs. Norris been content to stand before the world united only by a compact of this nature, they would have understood their relative position, and society would not have exclaimed so loudly as it did against the fickle and hollow nature of their *friendship*, when it found them converted suddenly into the bitterest enemies; for such was the result of that unfortunate interview which has already been described as taking place in the private sitting-room of Mr. Norris, where, until that luckless morning, the fair figure of a young lady had seldom if ever been seen. It was in fact an apartment appropriated to slip-shod idleness, to cigars and after-dinner nothingness; and if the stout gentleman, its sole proprietor, had one ground of self-gratulation more sure than all others, it was that he could do just as he liked in this apartment, no one daring, or choosing, to intrude upon him there.

Now let it not be supposed that the jealous rage which took possession of the usually sweet and placid Mrs. Norris, was the jealousy of love, in its accustomed sense of the word. Far enough from her mind was so unworthy an idea. It was simply the jealousy of friendship, so called—the jealousy of discovering that her friend was capable of communicating to another party a secret which she had failed to whisper first into her own ear; nor was the tempest which followed at all softened in its fury, by finding that the envied recipient of this interesting intelligence was her own husband. Beyond this too, there dawned upon her awakening mind certain additional circumstances connected with the insult, which enhanced in no small degree the indignity of the affront; for had not a deception—a trick been played upon herself—had she not been purposely sent to a different quarter of the town, and kept waiting by appointment, while her friend was acting her false part in the very centre of the family, whose secrets ought to have been held too sacred for her violation; and had not that friend at last been found, where even the wife of the husband's bosom seldom so much as thought of intruding?

Mrs. Norris, with all her pretence to feeling, was a woman of calculation, and even on this extraordinary occasion, with indignation flashing from her eyes, she was able to think of the future, and to calculate minutely what line of conduct on her part would *tell best* in society. Once, even at the height of her emotion, having discovered that a servant lingered about the door, intent, no doubt, upon collecting her facts for the benefit of *her* circle of society, this heroic woman had actually contemplated throwing her arms around the neck of her young friend, and so getting up a reconciliation; and had Dorothy held

out the slightest invitation favourable to such a mode of proceeding, there is little doubt but a union between the two parties would have been re-established then and there, of at least as durable and firm a nature, as that which had previously bound them together.

No such performance, however, came at all within the range of Dorothy's calculations. The last thing she would have dreamed of, would have been an act of tenderness towards one who had never occupied so much as a corner of her heart. She was not like her friend a woman of calculation, and let the future present what difficulties it might—let obscurity be her own portion—nay, even expulsion from society, disgrace, or shame, she walked as proudly from that apartment as if she had worn the crown of England on her brow ; and showed as little relenting in her countenance and manner, as little recognition even, as her towering figure swept past her astonished friend, as if she had never in her life held the slightest intercourse with such a woman as Mrs. Norris.

Here then was a conclusion to *one* of the world's friendships. Mrs. Norris had now no choice of alternatives. No one contemplating the figure of that girl as she left the house, could for a moment dream of turning her back again, scarcely could anyone be so utterly devoid of spirit as to desire it, under such circumstances ; and the lady of the house was consequently left to make the best, or at all events the *most* of her own story. How the gentleman employed himself will be seen elsewhere.

In the meantime, Dorothy felt rather strangely the solitude and obscurity of her own home, during the remainder of that day. But the most painful part of her situation was the necessity of communicating to Betsy Burton the entire failure of her efforts on behalf of the

wretched man, for whose sake she had thoughtlessly involved herself in such a complication of difficulties. Betsy had never sanctioned her interference—had never hoped that any favourable results could ensue from the meddling of such parties as those with whom her young mistress was associated. Indeed she had so decidedly and so unwaveringly opposed the suggestion of Arnold to place the matter in their hands, and ever since had been so constantly telling the chairs and tables in Mr. Dalrymple's establishment, but especially the spare bed-room, and the empty bedstead, that it never *would* do, and could by no possibility come to any good; that now, when her predictions were verified, she seemed almost to find a strange consolation in having known and declared from the first, that ruin and vexation would ensue from such a step.

But Betsy was not a person to remain satisfied with such a conclusion alone, however favourable or flattering to her own penetration. It was high time for her, as usual, to be *doing* as well as talking, and consequently not many minutes had elapsed after Dorothy's return, before she left the house for the purpose of again testing her own influence in other quarters.

Thus was Dorothy Dalrymple left to more than usual solitude. Her aunt was absent, and she had no party for the evening. Once or twice she thought of consulting Arnold Lee, since it was his affair, and through his advice that she had become involved in her present circumstances; but in no respect, except in that of having failed in her purpose, could he possibly sympathise with her. Besides which, the occasion itself was so great, as regarded his interests—so little as regarded her own, that there seemed a kind of mockery of his feelings in mixing one up with the other. Neither was it possible, from the fact of his

present exclusion from society, that he should aid her with others, and his calm counsel towards herself she rather feared at this moment, than desired. No, the net in which she was entangled was not for Arnold Lee to unravel. His object might be to draw her out of it altogether, and for *that* she was not prepared.

Confused, bewildered, not knowing the exact nature of her own feelings, or from whence arose the impulse which urged her on, Dorothy at length determined to make a round of calls to tell her own story, and so to face the matter out. She would, however, have had to drive very rapidly that day, to have been beforehand with Mrs. Norris at the many houses of their mutual acquaintance ; and Dorothy had only a hired conveyance, while her late friend had a couple of the best horses in the town of M——, the magistrate being a good judge on this point, whatever he might be on others.

One circumstance, however, proved much more favourable than the fleetness of any horses, only that it was equally favourable to both parties, and thus lost much of its value. It was that no single individual to whom the intelligence of the rupture was that morning communicated, cared the value of a straw which party was the most to blame, or whether either or both were blameable or not. No single individual to whom the intelligence was communicated cared for anything, in short, but their own amusement derived from the story, and their own power of amusing by telling it again. Thus there was great willingness to listen to the facts on both sides, and whether they were believed or not—whether they were taken up and made more of, and handed forward favourably or unfavourably, depended upon the merest whim or fancy of the parties to whom they were related—not at all upon

the merits of the speaker, or the confidence that was placed in her character for integrity and truth.

"I always *did* dislike Miss Dalrymple, and I see now what a serpent she has been," said some of the young ladies who had an eye themselves upon a certain villa then fitting up.

"That intolerable busy body Mrs. Norris," said others, "has just been treated as she deserved at last." And so the thing went round briskly and merrily, for the town of M—— wanted something to talk about just then, and before the close of a single day after the transaction itself, it had assumed as many different characters as there were listeners to hear, or tellers to hand it forward to their friends. Altogether, however, the balance of blame grew heaviest on the side of the younger party, and had any close investigation been made into the evidence as summed up that night, fears might have been seriously entertained, that the brighter star of the two would have ere long to hide her diminished head. Not that the town of M—— held any extreme views on the subject of female propriety of conduct, but that it had a trick of taking into account the good dinners given on one side, the wealth, the comfort, the distinction of place and position; with the poorness, the obscurity, and the scantiness of means on the other, and so passing judgment accordingly. Not that the town of M—— either was a particularly grateful town, and so passed favourable judgment in memory of good dinners previously consumed. By no means. It was a rising, prosperous, onward-looking town, as any one might find; and its judgments, in a moral and a social point of view, had always distinct reference to some good that was yet in expectation. Thus a man's character was not spoken of by that he *had been*, but by what he was expected to

be—whether rising or otherwise in the scale by which the worth of things was computed in the town of M——.

Weighed in this scale, Dorothy Dalrymple was indeed placed at an immense disadvantage with the wife of the wealthy magistrate; and she saw and understood her position clearly. She saw too, that it was an irrecoverable distance which she occupied. It is true her natural eloquence prevailed powerfully during the time of her speaking, and could she have delivered a public address to the people of M——, there is no doubt but the whole town would have been in her favour; but one by one, house by house, and party by party, the force of that eloquence became weakened, and one by one, often party by party, her friends relapsed as soon as she had left them, all feeling very powerfully the superior advantage to themselves of siding with a family of wealth and influence; rather than with an eccentric, poor, and almost friendless girl.

We have said that Dorothy saw and understood her situation, and she saw too to what consequences her present unfortunate dilemma would lead, if not provided against on her part by means at once powerful and determined. “If,” she reasoned with herself, “Mrs. Norris can carry all those along with her, who are at all dependent upon her wealth and influence for their enjoyments, there must be others of a grade one step higher, upon whom Mrs. Norris is dependent in the same degree herself. I will go,” she said, “at once to Lady Crawford, and lay the whole case before her. She has been my best friend thus far. Perhaps she will not fail me now.”

With this determination, Dorothy set out for Waverton early on the following morning. Busy with her own more immediate circle, of whom in fact she felt more sure, Mrs. Norris had not extended her calls so far as to the resi-

dence of Sir James and Lady Crawford ; and Dorothy had consequently the great advantage of submitting her own version of the affair to her friends there, without any previous impression having been made upon their minds from any other quarter ; and to do her justice, it must be acknowledged that her version was strictly true in all its leading facts. Indeed Dorothy considered, with some justice, that her case was so good in itself, as to need neither distortion nor embellishment. In the stern but simple truth rested all her strength ; and she spoke powerfully and warmly in proportion as she felt indignant at having her motives suspected, and her actions placed in a false light. She had not yet learned that painful lesson of human experience, that we often have to suffer from the world more actual condemnation, censure, and contempt, from some generous but imprudent action, dictated by the kindest feeling ; than for all our selfishness, greediness, or envy of others, if cautiously carried out and acted upon under plausible pretences.

Dorothy Dalrymple was by no means prepared for this hard discipline in the experience of human life, and the burst of indignant tears with which her eloquent oration at Waverton was concluded, so worked upon the feelings of lady Crawford in her favour, that looking round upon the unprotected situation of the poor girl, and seeing what a storm might rage around her unfriended head if left alone to bear the consequences of her generous enthusiasm, the kind-hearted lady determined to take her for a while entirely under her own protection, and thus not to flinch from openly and decidedly espousing her cause. There might be in this determination of Lady Crawford's, some little touch of her natural love of patronising ; but independently of that, she had a really kind and pitying dis-

position, fully capable of undertaking such a responsibility from motives of pure benevolence ; and her generous confidence had seldom been more welcome, or more really needed, than on the present occasion ; for to Dorothy there appeared nothing but absolute despair, if thrown back again into the obscurity from which she had been so suddenly drawn by her too flattering friends.

Having secured this powerful patronage, Dorothy felt no longer any difficulty in communicating the whole affair to her aunt, and as the invitation to Waverton extended also to that lady, arrangements were soon made for both aunt and niece being once more located in their pleasant quarters beneath that hospitable and protecting roof. Nor was Lady Crawford satisfied with this step only. The next, and perhaps a still more important act of kindness, was to introduce the friendless girl to a large circle of her own acquaintance, and to show the world that there were distinguished parties in whose favourable opinion she still stood very high.

Nothing more than this was necessary to create on Dorothy's behalf a very powerful army of friends, and the more her character was aspersed in other quarters, the more warm were her advocates and partisans in this. At such a crisis, friends, or rather adherents, were a little more important than Dorothy had ever been prepared to expect ; for no sooner was Mrs. Norris placed on the side of her enemies, than that lady closed immediately with the ladies of the Ashley family, adding fuel to the flame of their dislike, and greatly aggravating the grounds of their abuse by a thousand distorted circumstances extracted from her own personal experience of Dorothy's acquaintance. All the meagreness and poverty of her father's house was now laid bare—all the mal-occurrences with old Bridget, and

all the laughable disasters arising from scantiness of means, and inferiority of domestic appointments—all which Dorothy herself would have frankly told for the sake of a good story; but which, related as they were now in a spirit of bitterness and bad faith, wore a very different character, and produced a very different effect, than when they furnished laughter as described by her eloquent lips in the hearing of a few partial friends.

All this was now laid bare—made common and coarse jest of—exaggerated—trampled upon, as features of the Dalrymple family, and treated by the Ashleys as effectual barriers to the alliance with their illustrious brother, which it was the great object of their lives to defeat. Not that it could make much difference to them who the brother married, as their poor father so often observed, seeing how entirely he was separated from the members of his own family. Still there had been fond hopes cherished, that he would form some advantageous connection, which, under their downward circumstances, might form a stepping-stone back again into the society from which they felt more and more in danger of being eventually thrust out; and, independently of her own character being in itself so entirely incapable of harmonising with theirs, Dorothy now wore upon her brow the unpardonable offence of having entirely frustrated these long and warmly-cherished hopes.

Wherever there are two parties with opposing interests running high in society, there is a border-ground betwixt them, which is occupied by scouts, and tell-tales, and siders, first with one, and then with the other, as inclination, interest, or fancy may direct; and from such borderers it is that intelligence is usually obtained from both, as to what is going on in the camp of the enemy. Thus,

the expression, "I am not of either party," with which so many persons quiet their consciences, and wash their hands of the strife and the warfare that exists in the world, is far indeed from identifying them with positive *peace-makers*, or even with *lovers of peace*. So far from this, it has not unfrequently been found to be the motto of a martial banner, under which busy persons have passed to and fro from side to side, quite satisfied that they were not of either party, because they *told* equally of both.

In this manner there were many so-called friends of the Ashleys, who made it their especial business to gather all they could of the bitterness, the scorn, and the detraction extracted from that side of the question, and to lay it before Dorothy and her party with added bitterness, with heightened scorn, and with exaggerated detraction, winding up perpetually with the grand climax—that splendid alliance, which it was still positively asserted by Mrs. Ashley, that the daughter of the poor engineer should *never make*.

Had Dorothy been still as eager in her pursuit of social distinction as she had been twelve months previous to this time, she might have reflected, with no little complacency, that the recent rupture with a seeming friend, which for a moment seemed likely to cast her down out of the pale of society altogether, had in reality been the means of placing her on a higher eminence, of drawing around her warmer and more influential friends, and of rendering her a more marked and distinguished person altogether. That such was the fact, a girl with much less penetration than Dorothy might easily have discovered ; for what with her prison-visiting, her father's triumph as an engineer, and now the talk that was made about her affair with Mr. as well as Mrs. Norris, it was no unfrequent thing with

Dorothy to discover that she was curiously observed, and pointed out in public places, and that groups of persons gathered together were making her the subject of their conversation, whether for good or for evil, it was not in her power to ascertain. Sufficient for her—or indeed, *was* it sufficient? to feel that this was social distinction.

In the situation of Dorothy Dalrymple altogether, however, there was still an anomaly—a false foundation, which afforded her much conflicting feeling, and at times much deep anxiety. She was still poor—pitifully poor, in comparison with those into whose society she was now more than ever thrown; and she was not of a temperament to relish obligations, or to endure dependence. She wanted nothing so much as to be free—free to choose her own path of life—and free to govern her own actions, whether right or wrong. At present she felt, and felt keenly, that along with all Lady Crawford's kindness and patronage there was a kind of moral bondage; for while accepting and being really sustained by her generous advocacy, she must regulate her actions strictly by her rule and that of her friends; so that Dorothy began to see plainly she should soon, according to this standard, have no character at all; and to give up herself—that interesting self of which she had already made and thought so much, was the last alternative to which she would have endured the idea of being reduced.

“No;” said she, communing with herself, “it must never come to that. Why, I can neither speak nor act here but as a common fine lady! I must break the bars of this cage at all events. And yet, where to fly? That is the great question. If I had but money—a foundation of my own—a place to plant my foot upon, where some at least might rally round me! I hate this perpetual

buzzing after some other queen. I would be a queen myself!"

As Dorothy said these words, she glanced in a tall mirror, and the air and attitude she had unconsciously assumed looked, even in her own eyes, so exquisitely becoming, that her vanity once more took fire, and in the blaze there glowed before her mental vision long suites of richly garnished rooms, with images of grace and beauty, paintings, and sculpture—pillars, and alabaster vases—gilding, and flowers, and gems; and groups of friends, and intellectual converse, and she herself the queen of all! And how was all this to be made real? There wanted, in the common calculations of the world, but a small circle of gold around her finger, and the gorgeous picture would be converted into a splendid reality.

It was very favourable to the realization of this vision, that Lady Crawford, in one of her most friendly moods, invited Dorothy into her dressing-room that day, and entered with her into a very serious conversation upon her future prospects. It would have been altogether in vain with such a character, for Dorothy to throw away in jest, as was her habit, the friendly advice which her ladyship appeared disposed to give. She had to do with one who did not understand a jest, who liked a good-humoured laugh as well as any one, but had no comprehension of the kind of by-play with which Dorothy was accustomed to parry both the advice and the remonstrances of her aunt. Nor, indeed, would the present occasion have been at all a fitting opportunity for the display of such a talent. Dorothy felt this, and was silent; but her cheek flushed, and when she did raise her large eyes, and fix them full upon the face of her friend, they were almost fierce and wild with their more than usual brightness.

Whether their expression was indignation, or not, Lady Crawford never asked, nor did her companion declare ; for with a self-mastery which she *could* exercise sometimes to a wonderful extent, Dorothy still remained silent, with lips compressed, and cheek so burning, that a mere casual looker-on might have guessed the topic of their conversation to be love, or rather marriage ; for *that*, in reality, was the theme, and there often lies a wide extent between the two.

The friendly and well-meant advice of Lady Crawford being all delivered in smooth and pleasant phraseology, tended to this end—that there was an absolute necessity for Dorothy to establish herself in the world, on a more certain footing than that of the countenance and protection of any one individual or party of individuals, however influential in themselves—that to sink back again into the obscurity of her home, was to lose all the advantages she had gained, and so to afford a full triumph to her enemies—that an establishment, such as any lady in her sphere of life might be proud to be the mistress of, was, according to the general belief awaiting her acceptance ; and in conclusion, that guests were expected at Waverton, whose arrival would render it necessary that Miss Dalrymple and her aunt should return to their own residence.

When Lady Crawford had finished her kind and somewhat comprehensive discourse, she rose from her seat, and gracefully drawing one arm around the person of her young friend, imprinted a soft kiss upon her cheek, and left the apartment.

But how did she leave it ? With that mute occupant still standing like a statue there, until there came a strange sensation over her bright eyes, with a still stranger choking in her throat, and then she leaned both elbows on a table, and buried her face within her hands, and pressed

her eyelids closely and violently down, as if she would shut out the light for ever.

Long had Dorothy remained in this attitude, utterly lost to all surrounding things, when at last, suddenly awakened by the consciousness of approaching footsteps, she recollected that a large party was gathering for the evening ; and, escaping through an opposite door, she hastened to her own apartment, there to prepare herself with more than usual effect for the performance of her accustomed part.

No one who had seen Dorothy in the early part of that evening, seated as the centre of a listening group—no one who had heard her merry laugh, or watched the wild glance of her flashing eye, could have guessed what was passing in her heart of hearts, or imagined the deep conflict which was turning every emotion of her soul into tempest and confusion. But Dorothy had not learned to act a part for nothing ; and it admirably served her purpose just now to assume this disengaged and animated manner—now, when she would not have been sympathised with for the world.

Only once, for a single moment, was her eloquence hushed into deep silence. It was when Frederick Ashley approached her with his usual confidence of being acceptable, and other idlers gave way to allow him to occupy his accustomed place as the most favoured of her admirers. Then it was that her countenance fell, and that a slight shudder might have been detected creeping through her frame ; but she soon recovered her accustomed liveliness and self-possession, and if any one observed the alteration in her look and manner, it was only to attribute it to the most natural of causes—a secret partiality for an elegant and captivating gentleman.

It was in the midst of this gay scene that Dorothy caught the eye of Lady Crawford, beckoning her to leave the friends by whom she was surrounded; and with a strange and unwonted passiveness Dorothy obeyed, and was soon seen leaning on the arm of Lady Crawford, and walking with her towards a conservatory, which communicated with the drawing-room. It is probable that no one troubled themselves about how or why this move was made, all being more intent upon the moves they were themselves about to make, either in the dance, or at the card-table; nor when Frederick Ashley himself soon after disappeared, was there that flattering inquiry for him, or wonder at his absence, which his vanity might have calculated upon.

Altogether it was a very gay and delightful evening, for the rooms at Waverton had never been seen so crowded before; and when Dorothy again appeared amongst her friends, which she did before the spirit of the dance was at its height, she was playfully rallied upon the paleness of her cheeks, and again upon the sudden flush which succeeded to the almost ghastly expression which sat upon her countenance.

“And why should I not be pale as well as other people, and faint if I like?” said Dorothy with a forced laugh, which subsided in a moment; and all the while she was plucking off the petals of a white rose which she held in her hand, with as much earnestness as if it had been the only business of her life to destroy that flower.

“There!” said she, when it was finished, for the crowd was so animated that she could breathe her thoughts aloud without being attended to for more than a moment—“no more roses for me now; nothing but thorns for ever!”

CHAPTER VIII.



UT in connection with the sudden explosion which had so unexpectedly separated two professed friends, and set the town of M—— into a blaze of social heat, with their conflicting parties, there were other and infinitely more important events transacting, all which were hurried on by the springing of the same mine, which seemed to have no limit to the combustible elements with which it was destined to come in contact.

Great as was the excitement, the talking and tattling in the town of M—— which ensued upon the occasion of this explosion, it would have been scarcely worth a record, in comparison with the branching out of those consequences which extended to that guilty, miserable, half-penitent, already described as crouching in his abject humiliation beneath the just chastisement of an offended God; but still though in a great measure subdued by outward means, not yet submissively repentant.

The actual situation of a guilty soul brought into this position beneath the eye of its Maker, can only be fully understood by minds religiously enlightened, as well as religiously disposed. No wonder then that there should be so little thought of bringing the heart to penitence—so

much thought of bringing the body to punishment. No wonder then, that such a man as Mr. Norris should be entirely incapable of seeing any advantage likely to accrue from accepting a voluntary surrender of the person of the guilty man, at all superior to the advantage which might now be taken of securing him by force or stratagem, and then holding him up to public ignominy as a terror and a warning to all offenders against a righteous law.

Nor was Mr. Norris at all singular in the sentiments he entertained on this point. Wherever Betsy Burton communicated her views on the subject, they were treated with the utmost contempt, as the mere workings of a credulous and irrational mind. It was not, however, until all hope of effecting her own benevolent purposes was defeated, until one and then another had laughed at her suggestions, and had even threatened her own person as accessory to the crime, in case of her concealing the hiding-place of the unhappy criminal—it was not until she had laboured, pleaded, and borne with more misunderstanding, and even insult, than an honest woman ought ever to be subjected to, that she decided to give up her cherished purpose, and to allow the law to take its course.

It was not consistent with the principles of Betsy Burton to convey any information to the guilty man calculated merely for the furtherance of his escape, neither could it in any way serve the great end of justice towards her brother, which she kept steadily in view, that he should elude his pursuers altogether. Besides which, she had already done her part at much risk and trial to herself, and she had indeed borne with him longer than a common exercise of faith could be expected to extend. She had laboured with him kindly, seriously, solemnly, and she had trusted him from time to time, allowing him

respite after respite, when his very life seemed to be in her hands, and when she of all human beings had the right to enforce the sacrifice, of which she still pleaded with him to make a voluntary surrender.

"My hands are clean of his blood," said Betsy more than once to herself, as she pondered these thoughts in her mind. If they prefer a man's body to his soul, let them seize it; but *what shall it profit them*, any more than the poor guilty one himself?"

In this manner Betsy reasoned with herself, and having satisfied her strict sense of justice and right, that nothing more on her part remained to be done, she awaited the event with such an amount of composure as it was possible for a feeling and benevolent disposition to command under such circumstance. Her countenance, however, betrayed more than usual anxiety, her ear was more than usually quick to catch every sound or symptom of intelligence, and her retirement to the empty chamber was more than usually frequent; for it was there that she sought strength for herself, and asked for mercy towards those who were sorely needing it just then.

But if Betsy Burton became comparatively calm while waiting, and expecting every moment to hear tidings of some certain and terrible catastrophe, there was one whose mind was tossed upon a sea of horrors unspeakable, and who, for the first time in his life, felt himself implicated in transactions of the darkest and most terrible character. It was Arnold Lee, who had no sooner heard of the failure of that scheme which his young friend had undertaken, than he saw at once his own folly and madness in having committed so unfortunate a transaction to such hands.

"He is lost—lost for ever!" exclaimed Arnold, with

clasped hands, "and I have been the destroyer of my father!"

This exclamation was uttered only in the hearing of Betsy, who had communicated to him in a hurried and agitated manner the substance of what had taken place, and while she prepared to make a last effort by applying to some other party; while too the great business of two ladies quarrelling held in suspense those measures of justice which the magistrate was determined to act upon without mercy or delay, a thought flashed across the mind of Arnold, that perhaps he could yet save the unhappy man, or at least prevent his falling into their hands.

Like his friend Betsy Burton, from whom in early childhood he had probably imbibed some of her sentiments, Arnold had a strong sense of justice, which always presented itself to his mind before he ventured to act upon any powerful impulse; and even on the present occasion, when every moment might be of more than golden value, he did not rush out upon his daring project without first reflecting how far it would be just and right towards the imprisoned sufferer to do anything to forward the escape of the real criminal. Public opinion however was now so far favourable to James Burton, that reprieve after reprieve had been announced, and a general belief was gaining ground, not only that he was an innocent man, but that he would finally be exonerated and set free. It was the less necessary therefore for his justification, that the real criminal should be brought to justice. "At all events," Arnold concluded, "as my rashness and folly have been the means of bringing my poor father into this awful peril, and as he is now in all probability trusting to the secrecy of one who proved herself much wiser than I

was, it is my bounden duty to give him notice of the storm which is gathering over his head."

These reflections and conclusions passed through the mind of Arnold with a rapidity which delayed his movements no further than was necessary for the securing of a small sum of money, though it was all which he possessed; and before the emissaries of public justice had been apprised of their errand, or made acquainted with the locality which Dorothy had carefully indicated, Arnold was rapidly proceeding in the same direction, more surely guided by information which Betsy herself had at different times made him acquainted with; for not only had his deep interest led him to inquire out every particular she was able to give of his father's hiding-places, but even the sign by which she indicated her approach, as well as her assurance that he might appear with safety.

It was now some satisfaction to Arnold to reflect that the lonely church beside which his father had twice been seen, and the place of shelter in which he now had reason to believe he was secreted, were both familiar to his own knowledge, as being situated in the neighbourhood of a little village to which, during the time of his counting-house imprisonment, he had been accustomed to direct his quiet Sunday walks. This village was situated near the banks of the river, above the town of M—, and Arnold recollected with still greater satisfaction, that there used to be a kind of boating-place hard by, where his friend Arthur Hamilton not unfrequently embarked for a row up the river. "If then," thought Arnold, "I can secure his being got on board a vessel by one of these boats, I shall have done all that seems possible towards his escape; for, altered as his appearance may be, the very fact of being found concealing himself in this neighbourhood will

stamp his identity almost under any disguise, now that the alarm is once given, and the pursuit set on foot."

Such were the thoughts with which Arnold occupied his mind, as he pursued his rapid way, having taken the precaution to engage a carriage to the neighbourhood in question, and to alight at the entrance of a gentleman's grounds, as if he intended to call, and then dismissing the conveyance. From this place, so soon as the driver was out of sight, he hurried along the sides of hedges, and even pathless fields, with a rapidity and determination which carried him lightly over every intervening difficulty; and having reached the back premises of a very humble farming establishment, he looked round him eagerly, to distinguish a small barn or shed, standing alone on the low side of a field which sloped down towards the water, though distant from the shore about half-a-mile.

It was a dull cloudy day in the month of December. The cattle were no longer in the fields, and the whole place looked quiet and almost uninhabited, though scattered about with cottages and homesteads, such as are usually found within reach of a large and populous town. For purposes of concealment, however, no situation could well have been found more favourable, for the river having no landing place here, but a low stretch of muddy shore; there was no communication between that and the land, and in a direct line with the water there was not, from this little barn, a single house to be seen.

"They will never find him here," said Arnold, as he strode along, and a kind of secret satisfaction in the thought seemed to give strength and firmness to his step. In fact, he needed some such feeling to confirm his purpose, for the reasonable terror of encountering a human being—nay more, a father under such circumstances, had

already struck his whole frame with a coldness and rigidity, which he vainly endeavoured to overcome by the violence of his bodily exertions. His natural feelings towards his father had much to do with this, and the indescribable horror with which he had learned to contemplate his character, unsoftened by any tenderness on that parent's part towards himself. It was not, in fact, affection of any kind that was leading him on; it was his strong sense of what was due from himself, in consequence of his having so imprudently periled his father's safety; and this was mingled with a pity, almost as intense as were those other feelings of loathing and abhorrence, which all in their turn repelled and drove him back in heart and soul, even while his steps were hurrying him forward at an almost more than human speed.

Had the character of Arnold Lee been one of feeble purpose, he never would have entered that little solitary shed, so terribly agitating were the sensations he experienced on drawing near that spot, where he already imagined that he could *feel* the presence of his father; and, even beneath the very shadow of its shattered roof, he questioned, within himself, for what purpose he was doing this—what good could it effect; or why, with a character to *make* for himself, and a mother and sister to preserve from want, should he embroil himself in scenes so likely to be fatal to his own good name? Yet, notwithstanding these reflections, he went on and on, until his feet were rustling amongst the loose straw which lay scattered over the floor of the shed; and standing in this place, he saw the kind of half-chamber, of which Betsy had spoken, and the actual bundles of projecting hay, behind which he believed that the wretched man was concealed.

Trembling with agitation, he was able, however, at last to utter the signal sound; he then listened a moment, but all was still as death. He tried the sound again, more distinctly than before, but all was still; a third time, and he then listened intently, believing now that his father was not there. Looking up, however, he glanced hastily along the line of the hay-loft, which terminated within a few feet of his own person, and not higher than his head; and while carefully examining the heaps of hay, to discover whether there was any movement beyond, he detected the wild glance of two fierce and bloodshot human eyes, fixed steadily upon him, and peering out between two masses of hay, from under which an arm was slowly moving, until the bony hand, which grasped a pistol, could be distinctly seen.

While Arnold made this discovery, however, he did not silently await the doom which at that moment seemed inevitable, and which, from awakening a strong sense of personal danger to himself, seemed in a moment to dispel all other terrors, and even to give him nerve to stand unmoved to meet his death.

"Don't fire," said he, raising his hand suddenly, "you have but one chance, it is to be still, and listen to me; if you fire they will be upon you in an instant."

All this was said in breathless haste, and still the unbelieving man glared on, and still he grasped the weapon of destruction, though he delayed to fire.

"Your situation is found out," said Arnold, uttering his words with still greater rapidity, and earnestness. "There is a hue and cry after you."

"That woman has betrayed me," uttered a hoarse and almost inhuman voice.

"No, no!" exclaimed Arnold, "she has been true as a

martyr ; but never mind that, I tell you again you have but a moment for escape. Be still, and I will help you."

"How?" asked the wretched man, and his teeth could now be heard chattering with cold, or fear.

"Can you see the river, and the shore from that loft?"

"Yes, I have a crevice in the wall."

"You know the boating place, can you see that?"

"No, but I can see a little hill close by."

"Keep looking out," said Arnold, "and when you see me wave a white handkerchief, upon the side of that little hill, be sure there is a boat ready to convey you on board some vessel in the river, and then creep out along the hedge of the next field, and with all the speed you can, get down to the boat. I shall not be there myself, but the boatman will be prepared, and you will have no need to speak until you reach the vessel."

"What then?"

"Nay, then I can help you no further; look I leave you a small sum of money on the ground here."

"Is that all?"

"It is all I have in the world."

No further explanation took place between the father and the son, for Arnold felt that not a moment was to be lost. Whether his offered aid would be accepted or not, had nothing whatever to do with his earnestness to render it effectual. He could but act upon the only alternative which remained within his power, the issue was not for him to determine.

With this feeling, he now hurried onwards to the spot where two or three boats, as in bygone years, were moored along the shore; but being seldom in requisition at that season of the year, it was some time before a boatman could be found, and engaged to convey, as

Arnold told him, a poor sick man to a vessel which he pointed out, as then lying at anchor at some distance from the town of M——.

All this was done at a venture, for what indeed did Arnold know of the destination of that vessel, or whether the wretched man would be taken on board or not. He only thought it might secure his absence during the moment of search, and that with a boat at his command, and the small supply of money he had left behind, his father might probably devise some other plan more likely to ensure his personal safety. To the boatman, too, it mattered little who or what he had to carry; the money was already in his hand, and he began immediately to clear out the water from his boat, preparatory to steering off from the shore.

It was now high time for Arnold to make the signal for which he had directed his father to look, and he stood upon the side of the little hill, and fluttered his white handkerchief in such a manner as to convey no idea of his design, had any one been watching his movements. Taking the precaution to turn his face towards the water, and away from the land; he still kept his handkerchief in the air as much as possible, and still kept stealing furtive glances along the hedge-rows, and the fields, to where he could command a small portion of the shed distinctly in view; but no human figure moved as yet, and he felt his heart throbbing almost audibly, as the voice of the boatman sounded from below, with all those varied tones which announce the preparation of a vessel to leave the shore.

Still Arnold fluttered his handkerchief, and still he looked now more fixedly and boldly, for he was growing desperate, and still no form appeared.

“He must have mistaken the place,” he said, at last ; and bounding from the green eminence, which he had occupied, he ran off towards the shed at a speed even swifter than that which had brought him to the shore.

As Arnold neared the place of his fearful apprehensions, not a sound was to be heard, and he began to feel assured his father had escaped in some different direction, perhaps along a track better known to himself, and also more secure. Sincerely did he wish it might be so, for he had little hope in the result of his own expedients, and no desire to be further implicated in the matter himself.

Entering the shed with this conviction dawning on his mind, Arnold started back with sudden apprehension, as he saw that the money remained where he had left it, apparently untouched ; but, recollecting his father's strange personal prejudice against himself, he thought that perhaps he might not choose to be obliged to him, even for so small a sum. He thought, too, that in his haste and agitation, he might have overlooked or forgotten it ; but still, though he found in an instant many reasons why the money should be there, a strange and chilling apprehension was stealing over him, and he determined not to leave the place before ascertaining whether his father was there or not.

Those eyes, too, he almost fancied they were glaring upon him still, and even stronger was his feeling that the pistol was about to be discharged at his own unprotected head. To stand still and look about him was impossible ; the suspense of such a situation was not to be endured ; he therefore leaped from the ground, and springing up by means of the timbers which supported the shed, he

gained the floor of the loft or chamber, which had been his father's hiding place for so long. There all was darkness and mystery, there being no aperture in the roof, except here and there where the winds had torn away a fragment of the thatch, and he could just see that the unhappy man must have often employed himself in filling up these holes with bundles of straw, so as to shut out the light, and with it the pelting rain and snow.

Unable to make his search effectual without opening some of these spots, Arnold tore away the straw and rubbish, until a tolerable light was obtained through the narrow chamber; and there indeed, he discovered the form he was in search of, crouching quietly in one corner, with no longer any defiance in its gestures, or any agitation in its emaciated limbs.

"Father!" said Arnold, though the utterance of the word almost choked him.

There was no reply.

"Father!" he called more loudly than before.

Still no reply; and Arnold, stooping down, took hold of the lean hand. It told its own story, and dropped insensibly from his touch.

There was an empty phial upon the straw beside him. Arnold took it up, perceived the odour, shook his head, and laid it down again.

"I must begone from this place," said he. But he made a pillow for the body with a heap of straw before he went, and folded the hands together, disposing all the limbs with decency; and so he left the place, wending his way like one who walks in a dream, along the shore of the river—away from where the boatman still was waiting—away towards the busy town, where crowds might then be seen collected in that quarter, all discussing the proba-

bilities of some great villain being secured and brought in triumph through the streets. *That* villain at least was not reserved for such a fate. The hootings of the populace were not for him. From the breath of human praise and blame, for which he had sold himself, *his* soul was now shut out for ever!

CHAPTER IX.



ANY dark days and weeks passed over the head of Arnold Lee after this time, before he was able to resume his accustomed objects of pursuit, further than was required by the absolute and pressing duties of his situation. These he never neglected, nor even laboured through with less attention, because his own heart was torn by conflicting emotions, which it was impossible to overcome.

Arnold had been right in supposing that if escape for his wretched father was in any way to be effected, no time should be lost. He was right in supposing that no means would be neglected for discovering his place of concealment, and securing his person. The awful fact, which he himself had discovered, was better left to the emissaries of justice to find out for themselves, nor could any human purpose be served by his being implicated in the case. It was not so much then a desire to serve himself which had impelled him to leave that place of horrors, as a natural repulsion, mingled with a strong feeling that he could be of no service there. What might be the effects of the suicide upon the public, or upon the innocent individual

then lying in prison, he was at that time wholly unable to conjecture; and for many subsequent days he was too nervously alive to any intelligence that might reach his ear, to enter into any calculations respecting the future. It was hard to be enduring this state of sensitive apprehension in a public office, mixed up with those who might any moment announce what to him would be the most tremendous fact, without being at all aware, or caring even if they knew, in what manner he was affected by what they said; but Arnold had not borne the severe discipline of his varied trials without reaping some benefit in the school of affliction in which he had lately been taught, and the power of bringing himself into a state of more patient submission, was one of the most valuable acquisitions he had made.

Perhaps too the habit he had so early adopted of thinking of his mother, and of those he loved, before himself, was never of greater service to him than on the present occasion; for the agonizing apprehension lest any careless tongue should speak in the hearing of his mother and sister of what just now was forming the chief conversation of the town, so filled his mind with alternate fears, and plans of prevention, as to leave him little mental leisure for dwelling upon his own part in the suffering connected with this fresh exposure of their name to all the comments which public excitement might affix to a family already sufficiently overwhelmed with shame.

The extreme obscurity and retirement in which his mother and sister dwelt, was their great security against the floating rumours or local gossip of the place; and the poor woman of the cottage, indeed the family altogether, being close and quiet people, Arnold thought it best to add his own caution to their usual care on the subject of

communicating any news they might hear in the town to the inmates within their doors. It was a favourable fact, that no newspaper ever found its way into their hands; and in consequence of the increased illness of Lucy Lee, and the more interesting state of her mind, and feelings, which now rendered it a pleasure rather than a pain to sit beside her humble bed, the mother seldom left her place in that little chamber, nor held any conversation with the outer world, at all likely to place her in the position of hearing its intelligence respecting the transactions of the day. Even her attendance on public worship was now dispensed with, and though Mrs. Lee did think one day when she went out to make a little purchase for her daughter, that a group of idle women standing at a door were pointing her out to their neighbours; and that heads peeped out as she passed by, and parties remained gazing after her; she set all this down to the previous disgrace which had fallen upon her name, and to the fact of its having become known in that remote neighbourhood. Thus her patient soul, subdued by long suffering, was neither startled nor irritated, nor did the fact for more than a passing moment occupy her thoughts.

Dwelling so much more upon the state of his mother's feelings than his own, Arnold was in a manner lifted out of himself, and borne above the daily and hourly torture which it would otherwise have been, to hear the coarse or light remarks which were made in his hearing upon the "terrible affair," as it was generally called; and which, if ever at all softened or subdued in consequence of his being present, were only hushed down in a manner which made them a hundred times more painful, as bearing a direct relation to himself.

Still there were sources of deep interest in connection

with these remarks, to which the ear of Arnold became awakened; and, next to Betsy Burton and her brother, he was of all persons in the world most eager to come at the real truth of certain rumours now floating through the town, and even finding credence in the public mind. When the truth at last was unravelled from an immensity of confusion, and misstatement, and error, it appeared that a paper was found upon the person of the guilty man, containing a clear and circumstantial account of the whole transaction, which had brought such melancholy consequences upon one of the most unlikely of human beings to be concerned in an affair of so dark and fearful a character, as that had at first appeared. All was now explained, and James Burton clearly and fully exculpated, except so far as he himself had acknowledged to being an imprudent, but yet aimless loiterer about the fatal scene. All was now explained, and even the criminal himself was not a murderer after all—not even a robber, for the statement went to say that he had claims upon the unfortunate being who justly bore the character of a solitary miser. The nature of these claims was not so much as hinted at; and it formed a curious fact in the history of a human heart writhing under the greatest agony which it is possible to conceive, that there should still have been the same “ruling passion” as strong as ever, concealing from the world that close relation of father and son which it had been so much the business of a life to keep profoundly secret.

All else was made so clear, the dates, the circumstances so fully and methodically stated, and all were so entirely confirmed by the evidence of James Burton, when examined in his own case, that not a doubt remained upon the minds of people generally as to the truth itself;

although there were parties so prepossessed with the idea that a murder had been committed, as scarcely to admit the possibility of an old man meeting with his death from a violent but accidental fall bringing the back of his head in contact with the edge of a stone step. Neither could the same parties be persuaded to see, how the man whose only object was to escape unnoticed, had much more need of the miser's money, than of his life.

Leaving, however, all these different parties to the various constructions they might choose to put upon the affair, so as to accommodate the circumstances to the tone of their own minds, we will turn again to Arnold Lee, for it is with him just now that our narrative has most to do.

It may readily be supposed, that even with the most favourable of these constructions placed before his view, even with the facts themselves made clear, and thus rendered so much more satisfactory to a lover of strict justice, there was sufficient in the melancholy death of his father, and in the public sensation it excited, to render Arnold's position in the town of M—— at once humiliating and painful in the extreme. The reader may possibly remember that emigration had always been a favourite subject with Arnold from his boyhood; and now his favourite idea took fresh possession of him, with a force and vividness beyond what it ever had assumed before. It is true, the situation of his sister was an effectual barrier to any immediate project of the kind; but it was consoling to look even far off into a future when he should be away—away. Perhaps he never told himself where; nor even in fancy fixed the boundary of his habitation; but he still worked upon the idea in secret, as a prisoner might work at some little aperture in the massive walls of his

cell, with a faint and often fluctuating hope, that some time or other, it will prove to him a wide opening into liberty and light.

Often in these secret visions and castle buildings did Arnold check himself, under the conviction that he was erecting a pleasant edifice of hopes and enjoyments upon his sister's grave; for until that gentle head should be laid at rest, there could be no such project put in execution, his mother having always formed an important and attractive feature in his picture of an emigrant's life. But now that Lucy had learned to look upon the great change before her with so much resignation and hope, now that the world she was about to leave had grown so poor to her in all its means of happiness, there seemed indeed, but little violation of the feelings of a brother to look at least with calmness and satisfaction to that transition, which, as it grew evidently near, grew also more clear and hopeful in its eternal and blessed realities.

Arnold Lee, with all his strong sound sense, was constitutionally, and almost necessarily, a castle builder, because he had always lived under the compulsory restraint of many of his natural feelings, out of his element of late, and, therefore, thrown upon the exercise of his imagination for the supply of food for a large portion of his faculties and powers of mind. Hence there had grown within him the existence of a kind of second or hidden life, in which he dwelt at times very much to his own satisfaction; and, since there were no harsh laws of a material tendency to regulate this life, no restrictions of society, no cost of maintainance, he could invite what guests he chose to dwell with him there, undisturbed in their heart-communion by any vulgar calculation about matters of self-interest or worldly consideration.

Ah! it was a very pleasant mansion, this into which Arnold so often turned when wearied and disgusted with the actual world around him. It was a mansion easy to maintain too, all carpeted, and furnished, and adorned, without a thought of common cost. And there sat his mother in her calmness, and her beauty—for she *was* beautiful to him; and what, if one other form more brilliant than his mother's, had lately found a place there, was it not a home to which she would have been most welcome, even as a child of poverty and wretchedness? Yes; if ever there came but the shadow of a cloud upon the high clear forehead of this thoughtless being, Arnold was the first to see it, and then it was that his dreams went wandering away to his home in the wilderness, his castle on the mountain, his nest on the storm-tossed tree. And did he not place *her* there? Yes, with the tenderness of a brother, the watchfulness and care of a ministering angel. He did not worship her. He saw her faults, and grieved to see them. He studied—pondered—nay, even sometimes prayed, over the best means of correcting them; and thus she came to be like a very child to him in the mingled fondness and anxiety which he bestowed upon her.

If he could but have drawn her out of the whirlpool into which he feared sometimes that she was sinking. If he could but have placed her on some sure foundation—some noble eminence, and let her vigorous thoughts and powerful character, have free and healthy exercise! If he could but have stood beside her there, and shrouded her from every blast, and spread his manly arms between her and the storm, and so have kept aloof the guile of flattering lips—the spite of envious tongues—and so have held her to his heart, all pure, and noble, and untainted

by the world ! But whither did these wild adventurous thoughts conduct him ? Alas ! from such high flights, how had he always to descend into the stern realities of his hard lot, and to look down from the glorious distinction of a protector of female youth and beauty, to the low and mean restraints of his own position as a man disgraced and penniless, and, in the world's opinion, utterly unworthy even to dream of sharing his lot in life with any other being.

Arnold, with all his castle building, had common sense enough to see and know all this. He was a man of honour too, deeply imbued with notions of what society calls honour, and the necessity of obeying its restrictions ; and, therefore, not likely to have ventured, under present circumstances, to connect the fate of any woman with his own. To his mind it would have appeared the height of folly and impertinence to assume the possibility of engaging any lady's heart or hand ; for what had he to offer, or how was he to make up to any honourable woman for the degradation of associating herself with his ruined prospects, and blighted name ?

Not the most censorious of those who would have pronounced a stern and bitter condemnation upon any such advances made by a young man in Arnold's present situation, would have blamed him more severely than he would have blamed himself, had he ever harboured in his heart a deliberate design of this nature ; but, as the decision of such affairs is, for the most part, left to circumstances rather than to plan, so Arnold ventured, as he believed in perfect safety, to amuse himself upon the brink of a precipice, which, if by any chance he should happen to overstep, he would never forgive himself for having approached.

We have said that, for a short time, the circumstances

of his family entirely occupied his attention ; but it is not in the nature of that fascination which had taken such strong hold of his imagination, to give place to other claims, however near or dear. It rather makes them all its own, and by a powerful mastery over the judgment, persuades its willing devotee, that all the tenderest connections in life, all the holiest duties, and the most pressing responsibilities, will be at once sweetened and sustained, by accomplishing a more entire surrender to its influence. In this respect, Arnold Lee was not wiser than other men ; for if his steady mind was sometimes in danger of losing its balance in consequence of those occasional interviews which he held with a capricious girl ; if sometimes he now forgot the hour of parting, and was guilty of devising plans by which his services should be required in the neighbourhood where these interviews took place, rather than at a distance ; although he blamed himself severely for yielding to such a weakness now, he still believed the whole foundation of this falling off from duty lay, not in his seeing Miss Dalrymple so often, but in his not being able to see her always, to have her always by his side, and to live perpetually within the magic circle of her smiles.

Still Arnold, as a man of strict honour, would never have felt himself justified in presuming, under present circumstances, upon this strong conviction of his own mind—would never, in plain words, have spoken of his love, but that there fell, about this time, a heavy cloud upon the forehead he was so fond of watching ; and, what was still more fatal to his strength of mind, there came at times soft glistening tears into those large dark eyes, respecting which he had so often wondered whether they ever wept.

This was, indeed, the climax of his trial. Dorothy seemed altogether changed, softened, subdued, brought down from her high flights, and yet disposed to be confiding as a sister towards himself. Some men in his situation would have fancied themselves the cause of this great change, but Arnold dared not trust himself with such a thought. He only felt that Dorothy was more gentle, feeling, and womanly, than he had imagined her; and under that character she became a thousand-fold more attractive than before.

Nor was her occasionally saddened countenance the only evidence that some great change had passed over the dream of this imaginative girl. She no longer applied herself to the drawing lessons as before, but made strange marginal embellishments instead, for-ever playing with her pencil, as if to apply it skilfully had ceased to be an object of sufficient importance to demand her care; and once, when Arnold remonstrated with her on the subject, she answered, with hasty petulance, "What is the use of so much labour? If one can *buy* all kinds of beautiful things oneself, how absurd it seems to be for ever labouring at that which must necessarily be inferior."

"But *can* one buy them?" said Arnold, laughing, with the most perfect unconsciousness of the real meaning of her words.

"Why, certainly," said Dorothy, attempting to join in his laugh, "neither you nor I look very much like purchasers just now;" and she threw her paper from her, leaned back in her chair, and sighed heavily.

There was not in the constitution of Dorothy Dalrymple the slightest touch of anything like despondency, and foreign indeed to her habits was that melancholy and unproductive musing with which so many persons seem

satisfied to nurse their troubles, rather than to overcome them. No sooner therefore did a dark or dismal thought take possession of Dorothy's mind than some opposing project presented itself, and she was ready to act, however unadvisedly, in some way or other, even if the action itself produced no happier effect than relieving the irksomeness of unsatisfactory reflection.

On the present occasion she did not sit musing long. By degrees her eyes lighted up with their accustomed brilliance, and a more cheerful expression diffused itself over her face, as she suddenly looked full into the countenance of her companion, and said, "Did you ever feel, since you were a school-boy, an almost unconquerable inclination to run away?"

"I feel it at this very moment," replied Arnold, taking fire at the suggestion, "never more in my whole life!"

"Where would you fly to?" asked Dorothy.

"Any where," he replied.

"But where would you fly, if you were a woman?"

"I never thought of that. Besides which, a woman cannot go alone."

"True; and the worst of it is, she cannot get out of one thing, without plunging into something else. Oh! if I was but a bird—an eagle—a seagull—anything that was free!"

"I should have thought no human being could be more free than yourself.

"Alas! no human being is more completely a slave—bound hand and heart!"

"A willing slave then?"

"Oh! no, no, no—not willing, in the true sense of the word. Ah! if I had but had a mother!"

And Dorothy pressed both her hands over her face, and burst into a flood of tears.

Arnold was inexpressibly touched by this strong evidence of genuine feeling. Without being aware of what he did, and actuated merely by a kindly impulse, he took one of her hands in his. It was not withdrawn, and he then asked in tones of the deepest sympathy, "What is it, dear Miss Dalrymple, that makes you so unhappy? Can I do anything to serve you?"

"I have not a real friend in the whole world," said Dorothy, "and I want one just now, more than I can tell you. Unless, indeed, it is too late."

"Circumstances will not permit that privilege to me," said Arnold.

"Why not?" said Dorothy.

"Because," he began, but his lips trembled, "Because," he continued, "I should ask to be more than a friend;" and, will it be pardoned to this friendless and fortuneless young man, that having ventured thus far, he should plunge into a frank, and full, and eloquent disclosure of his feelings just as they were, warm from his true and manly heart, and therefore needing no disguise.

Whether it was that Dorothy was too much taken by surprise to be completely mistress of herself, or whether she really felt a secret satisfaction in listening to so unexpected a declaration, most certainly the hand was not withdrawn—most certainly her tears ceased falling, while deep blushes took their place upon her cheeks. Was it a feeling of triumph only, which Dorothy experienced at this moment, or was it really that she had a heart, and that now that heart was touched? Who shall decide? For Arnold, having once found utterance for his feelings, went on, and on, needing no inspiration but the truth, and eloquent as truth could make him. Conscious of every generous and noble sentiment, of all that he could do and

suffer, where his affections were concerned, for had he not been tried?—On, and on, he went; for still he fancied he was speaking to a willing ear, and still that hand remained in his—on, and on, with feelings, and then facts, the theme of his clear eloquence—down to familiar things—his own position, with its deep humiliations; and then his favourite scheme of emigration, now set forth as full of hope.

And so it might have been, but that on arriving at this climax a dimpling smile began to play about the blushing face on which his eyes were rivetted; and turning it towards him with that arch expression of her eyes so often worn on light occasions, Dorothy, assuming her most playful tone, said suddenly these words, “And live on air?”

It was enough for Arnold, and the hand was dropped. That tone—that look had changed the very current of his life blood. The being he had so loved was suddenly transformed into a woman of the world; and his great heart, with all its strong affections, was of no more value to her, than the jewel which she wore upon her ring.

“Miss Dalrymple,” said he, with altered countenance, “what do you mean?”

“I mean,” said she, still with the arch expression on her countenance, “that all this is very fine to listen to, but that it will not do to live upon; nor have I naturally any taste for Canadian solitudes.”

“Miss Dalrymple,” said Arnold again, with a sternness which absolutely terrified her, and sent the warm blood from her cheeks, leaving them pale and almost ghastly, “do you know what you have done?”

“No,” she replied, with a voice considerably subdued.

“Then I will tell you,” he went on to say, “you have deprived yourself of what the whole world is too poor

to purchase back again—a *real* friend. You have spurned from your feet one who would have lived for you—died for you; and one who has a right to say of himself, that he had no mean or niggard heart to devote to your service. Poor as I am, Miss Dalrymple, and you have taken not the most generous method of reminding me of my poverty—yes, poor as I am, I have a pride in being more worthy of your love, than if I possessed the wealth of worlds, and loved you less, or regarded you more meanly. Once for all, Miss Dalrymple, you have been to me like the very breath of my existence, for in my worldly degradation I have known no life but what has been shared, illuminated, blessed by you. I now see that it was all a dream—a beautiful dream, from which you have aroused me not so gently as you might; but still it is something to be awake—to have my eyes once more opened to the realities of life, and to be myself again.”

While Arnold uttered these words he was engaged, almost unconsciously, at the same time in folding up the drawings one after another. At last he came to some which lay upon the table at which Dorothy was seated, and on which she was actually leaning her arms, while pressing both her hands upon her face.

“Allow me,” said Arnold, with the tone and manner of a mere drawing master, while he took up one side of the paper and drew it gently away, Dorothy merely removing her arm for that purpose, though still not uncovering her face. At last his work was done, even his pencils collected together, and with business like dexterity the whole of his own property was reclaimed. He then retreated to the door, where he merely uttered a formal “good morning,” and in another moment it was closed upon his departing steps.

How long Dorothy remained in the same place and the same attitude, and what was the nature of the thoughts which flitted through her mind, leaving their lightening track behind them, must be left to the imagination of those who have plunged so deeply into the hidden recesses of the human heart, as to understand how often it wills to do the very thing it loathes, and casts away from it in a moment of caprice, that which at another moment it would recognise as the support and the treasure of a whole life.

It was not then the bitterest portion of Dorothy's self-inflicted suffering, that she must be and do the thing she hated and despised; but that she must, on the other hand, cast from her that which seemed to her just now, as the very foundation of all that was good and noble in her nature—all that was capable of yielding real happiness, of conferring honour, or of strengthening the better purposes of her soul. In her dreams of distinction she had probably never calculated upon this. All her calculations, in fact, had been made upon what she would gain, none of them upon what she must lose; and the shock of this great sacrifice, lightly as she had appeared to treat the treasure while within her grasp, was now far, far indeed beyond what she had ever anticipated as her experience of life.

On the other hand, Arnold was, as he had expressed it, "himself again." Whatever he might really feel was shut within his breast, for who was there in the whole world to feel or sympathise with him? His mother was the only being capable of doing this, but so far from calling upon her for any exercise of feeling on his account, he rather charged himself with selfishness and ingratitude that he could in any way have permitted his thoughts to wander from those natural claims to which, however, his mother

had never once suspected him of being unfaithful, nor in reality had felt that his affection or his interest were in the slightest degree estranged.

But although Arnold was "himself again," or fancied that he was so, he needed action more than he had ever done in his whole life before. He seemed to need more than action, even storm and tempest, to battle with. No more then for him the effeminate pursuits in which he had lately been engaged. He wanted now to feel the wild winds against his cheek, the rain and sleet upon his brow, or even the waves of a rough sea to lash around his feet.

Seldom in human experience, are duty and choice so agreeably combined as on this occasion of Arnold's life. The winter months had now passed over, and the spring had come, but yet had only shown its fierce and angry aspect; not the sweet melody of birds, and bloom of early flowers, but rushing winds, high tides, and swollen floods. A more than usually rough sea too marked the coming in of spring this year, and even in some of its advancing months the shore was strewn with wrecks, while vegetation seemed to linger, in despair of more genial airs, and brighter skies.

It was exactly one of those seasons to test the necessity of the improvements along the line of shore, which formed the theme of Sir James Crawford's many speculations, and he now required the attendance of competent parties on the scene, in order that a more correct judgment might be formed with regard to the extent of security required.

Most cheerfully, nay, eagerly, did Arnold now offer himself to make one of the party about to be sent out early on the morning of the day after that which has just been described, as the scene of his bitter trial and humiliation. Whether his drawing lessons were concluded or

not, he cared not to ask. To him they were so, for ever; for even if a mechanical attendance should subsequently be required of him, he had fixed within his own mind a resolution as firm as adamant, that the spirit in which they had been conducted should never be renewed.

Early in the morning then, and battling with a fierce north wind, Arnold pursued his way to the place of appointment, now clad in all the rough and rude habiliments of a mere workman, and accompanied only by one attendant, whose appearance, wearing a strange mixture of the dress of a sailor and landsman, so harmonised with a very questionable expression of countenance, as to render this man a sort of marked character, at once the butt of the office, and the terror of children at whom he was very fond of shaking his wild shaggy head.

The employment of such a man had in fact been one of Mr. Dalrymple's cheap speculations, for he had made his demand for work without either reference to give, or character to show; and indeed it was the general opinion, that the less was said about his character the better. He reported of himself that he came from beyond seas, and accounted for a dark hollow look about his eyes, and occasional aberration of mind, by a sun stroke which he had received on board ship, and in consequence of which he enjoyed a small allowance from a fund connected with the shipping interest.

From this account of himself, as well as from certain eccentricities which strongly confirmed the truth of his report, the nick-name of Mad Morton had been bestowed upon this man; but whether Morton was his real or his assumed name was of little consequence to any of those with whom he was now connected. It was sufficient for them that Mad Morton was a bold, hardy, fellow, and

though but little accustomed to any regular or systematical operations, either of head or hand, could be made highly serviceable in certain cases where rough work had to be done, or dangers encountered, which others were reluctant to face. He was, in fact, a kind of pioneer, when forbidden precincts had to be invaded, and now that the fierce winds and cold sea waves were the only enemies to be faced, he was a still more valuable assistant, owing to the weather-proof character of his hardy frame.

Before a single day had been spent in the society of this man, associated as they now were in battling with the stormy elements, Arnold was indeed *himself again*; and when at night he warmed his wearied limbs at a cheerful wood fire in the fisherman's cottage, in which they found a rude but welcome shelter, he almost wondered at himself for the depth of despondency into which he had so recently been plunged.

It was here, however, that he first became aware of some of the strange peculiarities of his companion; for while he entered cordially into the subjects of interest in which it was not difficult to engage the fisherman's widow, Morton remained apart, more gloomy and morose than Arnold had ever seen him before.



CHAPTER X.

IT was a fortunate thing for the gossip of the town of M—— that Mrs. Norris herself had been an eye-witness of what has already been described as taking place, on an occasion of great importance, in the drawing-room of the Ashley family; and from the reception her intelligence met with wherever she went, it appeared to be *esteemed* fortunate, that so active and circumstantial a recorder should have been present, during a scene of such lively and striking emotions, as those which immediately followed the dispersion of the beautiful vision of the new tradesman, and his elegant articles of merchandise.

What became of the man himself, or how he managed so cleverly to get every item of his goods conveyed out of the room immediately after the terrible enunciation pronounced by the master of the house, there seemed to be no one in a condition to enquire; for before the scene of gorgeous enchantment was dispelled, the mother and the daughters had got up another scene of a very different nature, though equally striking, and, in an artistic point of view, even more attractive to Mrs. Norris, as a beholder and a future delineator of its touching details.

It would have been pardonable in any one who heard Mr. Ashley “speak his mind,” as he called it, under one of those ebullitions of irritated feeling which have already

been described, had an erroneous idea taken possession of their minds, as to the real heart and character of the speaker; for, like many other persons of weak and timid nature, he was violent on the instant, just in proportion as he was habitually docile, and easily subdued. At such moments it was not only his words, but also his voice and gestures, which indicated the most authoritative rule in his own house, and a determination, like adamant, that on one particular point he *would be obeyed*. Nor was the wife so very wide of the truth, when she called her husband the most unreasonable and requiring of men, only she should have added "at such times;" for taken at his word, he would occasionally have insisted upon impossibilities, while the fit was upon him. In reality, however, the object insisted upon was nothing to him; the expression of a thousand, sore, and irritated, and trampled upon feelings, in one passionate outburst, was all; and when that was over, as it always was in a moment, the point at issue was lost sight of, and he was as yielding and as gentle as a lamb, with one additional claim the more upon his submissiveness and self-renunciation—that he had, in his passion, done some unkind or foolish thing, for which he owed a long atonement to his family.

On the luckless morning already described, Mrs. Norris had for the first time in her life beheld the man enraged; and, she repeated many times that day, that she could not have believed it without such demonstration; that Mrs. Ashley had really more in her private lot to contend with than any one could form the least idea of; and that for her part, she only wondered how the family altogether could keep their wrongs and sufferings so much to themselves. That very morning, and she shook her head with unutterable meaning, what had she not beheld!—a listen-

ing group around her wondered what?—"the daughters—those dear and highly educated young ladies, actually degraded in the sight of a common shopman!—actually denied the common necessities of life!—actually told before that mean and vulgar person, that he their father would not be answerable for any purchases they might make!"

"And a very suitable piece of information, in my opinion," said Mr. Norris, who happened to overhear the eloquent discourse of his wife. "I only wish the poor fellow had had the spirit to tell them so before."

"My *love!*" said Mrs. Norris, in her sweetest and most pleading tone, as she gently touched the face of her husband with her fan, for she had been exceedingly bland and sweet in that direction ever since the affair of her rupture with Dorothy, all her embittered feelings having found vent through another channel.

"My *dearest* love;" she repeated many times in the same tone, as the gentleman went on inveighing against the conduct of Mrs. Ashley and her daughters; for it is not unusual for gentlemen to espouse the side of the question which Mr. Norris had now taken up; nor perhaps is it less natural for ladies to espouse the other. In the present instance, however, Mrs. Norris, like a prudent wife, refrained from arguing the point with her lord. She never did this in company. But knowing perfectly who were on her side, and what further might be said and understood in support of her views, she only shook her head and smiled, and looked knowingly amongst her friends, with an expression which indicated as clearly as any words, that the subject was to be more fully discussed amongst themselves, some other time.

But with regard to the scene in Mr. Ashley's drawing-room, there were more serious consequences to be contem-

plated than any contending opinions, either expressed or understood, which might find a place in the evening parties at M——. Mr. Ashley had before this thrown out hints as to the real state of his circumstances. The whole body of his mercantile townsmen had for some time been apprehensive of his real situation; and now that he had himself declared it so openly in the hearing of a perfect stranger, there remained no other alternative for the ladies to look to, than public exposure, bankruptcy, and shame. The man too had a great triumph both to enjoy, and to declare, in his own escape from being *let in*; and thus could shake his head, and rub his hands, and actually *pity* less fortunate tradesmen in the same line.

But Mrs. Ashley—the clever managing Mrs. Ashley, that paragon of women, who never was on the wrong side in all her life, nor missed a good opportunity, nor thought, felt, nor acted otherwise than right, how was she to sustain herself and her tender offspring under the accumulated sufferings of this shock? For herself, it was well, as she often said, that she had lived all her life for *them*—that she had put self aside—forgotten,—immolated self. Here was the reward of her devotion to the tender duties of a mother! She was enabled to bear her own sufferings in silence, only that she wept profusely. Yes, now she really did weep; for the losses, the privations, the difficulties—were they not her own?

Mrs. Ashley drew indeed very largely upon the sympathies of her friends, and there were many who, under that name, came just to see how things were going on; to hear about the sale; and to make close observations upon certain services of plate, and china, window curtains, carpets, and so forth, with a view to being purchasers themselves; so that all the while they were condoling with

the sufferers in looks, and tones of pity, they were looking out with reference to the day of sale, when they should have a chance of buying up the property of their dear friends. Oh! beautiful friendship of the world! One hardly knows how sufficiently to admire a system so perfectly adapted to the requirements of a selfish nature. The pity is, that it should not be recognised under a different and more worthy name.

It would be very unjust to Mrs. Ashley to suppose that she could have been overtaken by any probable event in life, without a plan. Her whole existence was a plan. There was but one flaw in her good management—that the event which of all others in the experience of humanity is most sure to come, appeared to be less prepared for than some of merely probable occurrence. Thus, if in life Mrs. Ashley had never been taken by surprise, it remained more than probable that the grand surprise would be in death.

It is with life, however, that she still has to do, and with some of its most pressing emergencies, just now. To be dignified under a failure, and graceful while one's household property is being sold up, would have been almost too difficult for Mrs. Ashley herself, even though supported by her five daughters; she therefore adopted the more prudent plan of paying a round of visits amongst certain family connections in the south of England, where, during the life-time of her own mother, she had enjoyed the society of an extensive circle of what is called good society. How far a mother with five daughters under circumstances of bankruptcy would be generally found welcome guests, was not for the party in question to discuss. They had their plan, and it was acted upon accordingly.

Poor Mr. Ashley had no plan at all. If ever there was any one entirely without self-support under such circumstances, he was that man. Not that his distress of mind was so great as is often the case. Some persons thought he looked like one who was really relieved, when the final crisis came—as if a burden was taken from his shoulders, or a long suspense put an end to. And so in reality it was. But what to do, or where to hide his head, were questions which he appeared utterly incapable of taking into consideration.

Happily for him, his well known character had been such as to obtain for him some real friends; though all had felt that to attempt to assist him while forming merely an insignificant item of a large expensive family, would be as useless as it might be deemed impertinent. But now that he was left alone, there were many gentlemen in the town of M—— prepared to act nobly, as well as to feel kindly, towards this apparently lonely and deserted man. To establish him again in any business over which he would have entire command, would have been a rash enterprise; for besides having already passed the meridian of life, it was evident to all who had watched him narrowly, that his nerves were more shattered by accumulated trials, than impaired by time; and that in fact the vigour of his frame was gone. Besides which, his mind had never been calculated for the management of business beyond its minuter details; and the parties so kindly interested on his behalf, concluded more wisely, that to place him in an honourable but less responsible situation, would be more conducive both to his respectability and to his peace of mind.

The situation of a clerk in a merchant's office, with a very comfortable salary for a single man, was therefore

decided upon as the best means of promoting his interests; and he was not long in being established in a position sufficiently advantageous to ensure for him all the external comforts of life which his habits and disposition demanded. Its luxuries he had almost ceased to care for, having purchased them at so high a price. Quiet and regular occupation, and the condolence of a few certain friends, were all the blessings which at present he desired; and the perfect calm of his solitary lodgings, unassailed by the breath of reproach, for what he knew not that he was guilty of, or solicitation for what it was not in his power to grant—this perfect calm was so new to his experience, that for many days the pleasure it afforded effectually solaced his harassed and often wounded mind.

It was natural, however, that as time passed on, and as his most pressing anxieties abated, there should come a sense of loneliness in connection with this situation. And often did the solitary man sit musing by his fire, and wishing that he had his faithful Kate beside him. Often, too, his thoughts went back, as was their wont, to the childhood of his own children, and sometimes he would almost fancy that he heard their infant laughter once again, or playful footsteps on the stairs, and soft hands upon his cheek, and—ah! it was a strange confusion of images, and thoughts, and recollections, which made the world of that poor man's existence now; nor were the images less strange, the thoughts less busy, or the recollections less confused, that there was no one near him to beguile him of his loneliness, or, as Kate had often done, to charm away the craving of his overstrained and wearied nature for that which at the moment seemed equally to soothe and stimulate, smoothing off the edge of irritation and anxiety, and sending a transient thrill through all his

nerves, which felt like strength, though in reality it but increased their weakness.

Of all the kind hearts, and these were not a few, who rejoiced in Mr. Ashley's settlement, and apparent comfort, there was not one so really thankful as that of his niece Kate Staunton, who wrote to him perpetually in the most affectionate and cheering terms, urging him in return to write to her and tell her all the good or evil of his present lot. But these letters, welcome as they were to the receiver, found no answer. Her uncle could not write, he had too *much* to say ; and he was ever dreaming—dreaming—letting his thoughts flow through his mind, rather than thinking ; and so the letters lay beside him, a precious hoard, and he was ever imagining answers to them, but not writing.

Determined at last to see how the case really stood, and, perhaps, pleasing herself with an agreeable surprise, Kate managed so as to accompany one of the servants from the hall one day, and thus to look in at her uncle's lodgings, if possible, to await there his return from business, and thus to enjoy a few moments of unrestrained and confidential intercourse again.

To Kate this was a very pleasant little expedition, and Margaret and she had so planned it, that the carriage should be detained sufficiently late to allow of the much wished for meeting between the uncle and the niece. Before this, however, there was a large portion of the day to be got rid of, so Kate made first a call upon Miss Dalrymple, under the hope of meeting with her cousin Arnold. But he was gone, had not been in the office for some weeks ; Miss Dalrymple knew nothing of his movements. Her tone, as she said this, was one of the most marked indifference, but her cheek belied the expression,

and she left the room so hastily to call for Betsy, that Kate began to fear all was not right with Arnold, or, possibly, with one associated with him. Her fears indeed took a more probable and active turn in consequence of a successful application having been lately made to Mr. Dalrymple to receive Arthur Hamilton into his office, though on a very different footing from Arnold; and quickly were the apprehensions of Kate excited, lest some freak of temper, or other irregularity, should have caused trouble and disgrace to Arnold on his friend's account.

Kate felt, however, that it was not her business to be enquiring about the young men in Mr. Dalrymple's office, and she was glad to see Betsy Burton entering the room, in order that she might obtain such information respecting her own family connections, as could not easily be conveyed in letters.

"You are the very person I have been so much wishing to see," said Kate to Betsy, at the same time taking the hand of that faithful creature in her own. "Again and again have I written to poor Arnold, but without receiving any answer. No doubt he is too deeply distressed by the death of his father, and all those horrible transactions. I could well believe that any other person, under such circumstances, would be incapable of writing; but Arnold and I were always so intimate, so perfectly undisguised with each other, I scarcely know what to make of it. Ah! Miss Dalrymple, do you see what you are doing? I beg your pardon, but you are sealing your note with black. You are not in mourning, I think?"

"True," said Dorothy, with a forced laugh, "It is indeed a most stupid mistake; but I will let the letter go notwithstanding. One *may* be in mourning, you know, without having lost a friend."

"Yes," observed Kate, "and one may lose a friend without there being any death to deplore. I sometimes think this is the heavier calamity of the two."

"Then you must sympathise very deeply with me," said Dorothy, "for I have recently lost many."

"And gained more," observed Kate, smiling. "You are a most fortunate person, Miss Dalrymple. Circumstances which would have been the greatest disadvantage to others, only bring you more into public notice and favour, so that the falling away of one friend is but a signal for a whole army of friends to rally round you. That is just what you delight in, is it not?"

Dorothy shook her head slightly, but did not answer for some time. She looked more than usually thoughtful, so much so, that Kate was almost sorry she had spoken so lightly. At last, after musing for a few seconds, Dorothy said very gravely, "It seems to me that one has two modes of liking—two tastes—two natures—if I may use the expression; and that the happiness of life consists in these being in harmony with each other. Now mine are as opposite as the poles—instinctively at variance. If, therefore, I gain friends on one side, I must necessarily lose them on the other."

"In simple phraseology," said Kate, "you have a good and a bad nature, warring with each other; and in this you are certainly not singular, nor more unhappy than others. Where would be the responsibility of our actions, if it were not so? Will you pardon me if I say more?"

"Yes, say what you like."

"Where, I was going to say, would be the voluntary surrender of the heart to God? It seems to me, that not only earth, but even heaven itself would be comparatively poor, if there had been no *voluntary* service of God here

—no struggle—no suffering—no gradual progress onward and upward, in spite of difficulties and temptations. How indeed should we arrive at any state of feeling like gratitude? And yet of all the emotions of which the human soul is capable, that of gratitude towards its Creator—its Preserver—its Redeemer—is at once the most appropriate and delightful. If then we had never been tempted—never been tried by the warring of these two opposite natures—if we never felt their power on the one hand to degrade, to ruin, and destroy, we could never understand the mercy of God in his offered means of pardon and redemption. But I am really preaching you a sermon this morning. I beg your pardon, Miss Dalrymple, for saying what I am sure you could have said much better yourself.”

“I am afraid I am not much addicted to saying such things;” replied Dorothy, “nor thinking them either. One thing alone startles me, and that is what you said about gratitude. Now, do you know, I am not conscious of ever having felt grateful in all my life. It does not seem to me that I ever had anything to be grateful for.”

“Not the kindness of your friends?” asked Kate.

Dorothy shook her head, and a scornful expression rested on her lips.

“I will ask you a graver question,” said Kate—“Not for the goodness of God in keeping you from doing wrong in moments of temptation?—in strengthening you to choose the right, when the wrong looked more pleasant?”

“Never!” exclaimed Dorothy, with an emphasis which was almost startling in one so young, and yet so passionate. “I have always chosen the wrong, and *done* it, when it pleased my fancy.”

“Then,” said Kate, with a countenance as serious as that of her friend, and she laid her hand emphatically upon

her arm as she spoke, "then you have tenfold reason to thank God that he has not permitted you to be tempted by anything absolutely bad."

"Do you think I should do it?" asked Dorothy. But she had begun to smile; and while her countenance wore that peculiarly arch expression for which it was so remarkable, and her voice assumed that tone of badinage in which it was at once so playful and so sweet, a graver and a deeper reasoner than Kate might well have been baffled; and feeling that it was high time to pursue her other avocations, she turned again to speak with Betsy Burton, and to hear her account of Mrs. Lee and Lucy. After which she hastily pursued her way to the present residence of her uncle Mr. Ashley.

It was an agreeable surprise to Kate, to find him situated in such respectable and cheerful apartments as those which formed his present home; the people of the house, too, such as Kate could commend him to, with a reasonable expectation that his comforts would not be neglected. In fact, she spoke of him in such warm and cordial terms, that they felt doubly interested in his favour, and promised all that Kate enjoined upon them. In the meantime, as there wanted yet an hour to the time of his accustomed return, Kate determined to turn it to the best advantage. First, therefore, she carefully examined his wardrobe and his linen, to see what he most wanted which her industry could supply; and securing a large bundle of articles which needed repair, in order that they might be taken back with her to the Hall, she next set about an alteration in the furniture of the rooms, such as she saw at one glance would impart to them an appearance of greater space and comfort.

In this pleasant kind of enterprise Kate was all activity

and method, only calling in the assistance of the servant of the house where the strength of her own arm was absolutely insufficient. It might have been more picturesque, and have formed a more touching episode in a story, had Kate sat down in her uncle's vacant parlour, and leaning her head upon her hand, first contemplated the change of his circumstances from the splendour of his former abode to the simplicity and homeliness of this; then taking a page of spotless paper, had she poured out upon it the overflowings of her affectionate heart in tender and sympathetic language. But Kate was not of that temperament, and seeing so much to do—so much that she herself could actually accomplish—she was just as busy during that little hour as any upholsterer in the town of M——; so that when at last her uncle's knock was heard at the door, she had to run to a glass to adjust her scattered tresses, to draw on her gloves, and to replace her shawl, so that she might not appear to have been actually making a slave of herself in his service. Mr. Ashley's was naturally a delicate and grateful mind, and Kate understood how to pay him the higher compliment of supposing that he would be rather pained than gratified to find her fatigued and harassed by actual labour to increase his comforts. Would that *all* understood this higher range of compliments, and how to pay them.

Kate had become perfectly disengaged, so that she could stand as quietly as her beating heart would let her, while her uncle's step was heard slowly ascending the stairs. It sounded like a weary tread to her expectant ear, but he knew not who was there to welcome his return. He pictured only the empty room, the unstirred fire, and the solitary chair placed near the table on which the cloth was spread for *one*.

The meeting between the uncle and the niece may be more easily imagined than described. Never, perhaps, did youthful fancy conjure up a vision more beautiful to its eye, than looked the form of Kate Staunton to that wearied man, as she stood smiling within the door of his parlour, so that he might not see her until they were both secure from observation. To describe the overflow of feeling which then took place on both or either side would be impossible. It is not in fact a subject suited for description; for both had much to say, yet so much more to feel, and such a stinted modicum of time in which to concentrate its overflow, that little could have been gathered even by a listener at the door, except that the two within that humble room possessed a treasure which thrones are too poor to buy—an entire and deep affection for each other.

And perhaps after all, this was the chief impression made by each upon the mind of the other during that brief interview; for every moment the sound of the carriage wheels was expected, so that no lengthened details could be entered into on either side. And there the carriage was at last—heavy and slow, but very sure; and there was the voice of Thomas in the hall below; and in another instant Kate was gone. The solitary man was seated after his dinner that evening with both feet on the fender, gazing into the fire, and a smile was actually playing on his lips, and it was not the effect of wine, for his accustomed allowance stood upon the table untasted that day.

CHAPTER XI.



NCE more at home, within the quiet circle at Hatherstone Hall, Kate Staunton had fallen into the usual routine of their simple occupations with a liveliness and interest which added greatly to the happiness of the inmates there. She was in fact the very addition which their domestic retirement so much needed; for although Mr. Staunton had in many respects entirely recovered from the stroke which at one time threatened his life, he continued much enfeebled in his bodily frame, and in his mind so sensitive and easily disturbed, that the utmost caution was necessary in communicating with him respecting even the ordinary transactions of every day.

To keep his mind amused, without being irritated, would have been a difficult task for any one alone; for Margaret it was quite impossible. The aid of a younger and a lighter spirit than her own was absolutely necessary; her natural and legitimate department was to soothe, and to serve—amusement she had never made the slightest pretence to; if therefore, at times, she even succeeded in this nice art beyond her expectations, it was generally by some faithful and clear recital, or by some well chosen piece of information told at the right time; but the how,

or the why she had been able to amuse, Margaret herself knew no more, than in all probability did those who listened to her; for there was something in her manner, as well as in her general character, which directed people's thoughts *away* from herself; so that she was less remembered in her presence, than in her absence—*that* was always felt; so that many who scarcely heeded the quiet comely matron, who plied her needle so rapidly, and sat so still, when she was near, began to have innumerable wants, and unsettled feelings, which Margaret could have supplied, so soon as she was gone.

Heavily indeed, to poor Margaret, had passed the long season of her husband's illness—the more so, that affliction in many forms was pressing upon those who had the strongest claims upon the family, and that she was necessarily shut out from making those claims understood, and consequently from relieving them. To a disposition naturally so generous, and to feelings so full of sympathy for human suffering, it would have been poignant misery to tread the floor of her own spacious and well furnished hall, or to sit down to her own abundant table, but that the anxious care and pressing exigencies of every day, claimed so much of her attention, as scarcely to allow time for the indulgence of such unavailing regrets. As time passed on, however, and week by week was marked by increasing improvement in her husband's health, although the same necessity for care remained in order to maintain the quiet of his mind, the duty of being his constant and only companion became more difficult, and never was welcome more cordial than that with which Kate Staunton was received at the Hall; more especially as her grandfather had that very day expressed a desire to have her near him. Indeed, so important did she

soon become to him in her altered and improved character, that even a day spent in the manner we have just described, left such a blank behind her, that Hatherstone seemed scarcely like itself; and so late did the carriage appear to be, to those who listened that night for its return, that Thomas had to bear a sharp reprimand from his master for having overstayed his time; and although his watch was promptly exhibited to show that he had been punctual almost to a minute, Mr. Staunton made no scruple to assert that he knew best, and that clocks and watches were nothing to him; to which philosophical conclusion, of course, the man Thomas had nothing more to say.

So new and pleasant to the heart of Kate Staunton, was this feeling of being wished and waited for with real impatience, that she scarcely knew what to make of it, and might perhaps have grown vain upon it, but for certain drawbacks to her vanity which she kept locked in her casket, to visit and turn over, and reflect upon, when no observant eye was near.

She might, too, have become more happy than is good for any human being, but for a few drawbacks of the same nature, all kept secret too; for no one watching the countenance or movements of that cheerful looking girl, or listening to her lively voice and merry laugh, would have believed that she had any thing but happiness within the circle even of her secret thoughts. It was well for Kate, however, in more senses than one, that laughter and pleasantry were not all that she lived for—it was well for her that she had of late more especially turned her attention to graver and more important things; for there were moments now, in which mere amusement would have been as much out of place as it would have

been wearisome and unwelcome. There were moments, nor were these the least happy of Kate's present life, when she was called upon to be very grave and still, and often to sit quietly beside her grandfather, and read to him such passages as he directed her attention to; and then sometimes to allow him a long thinking time, in which it was evident that he did not wish to be interrupted.

Once or twice in the autumn, soon after Kate's arrival at the Hall, these moments of quiet musing and reflection had taken place in the open air, beneath the shade of overhanging trees. Days for this purpose had been chosen, which though marked with all the gorgeous beauty of the dying year, had

" Sent into the heart a summer feeling."

And now the summer itself again was come, or coming, with all its pomp of beauty, and luxuriance of leaves and flowers—with all its melody, its perfume, and its gentle gales, was it not happiness enough to sit under the shade at high noon, and listen to the drowsy hum of wandering bees, the cooing of wood-pigeons in the chestnut boughs, and all those woodland sounds which turn the very silence of nature into music? For it is *not* silence after all, though deemed such by the heart that is aweary of the tumult and turmoil of busy crowded human life—it is *not* silence; for ever there is something in the air sweeter than silence, and, as often seems, almost as still—either the flow of rippling streams, the swell of ocean when its waves fall gently, or the whisper of the aspen leaves telling their secrets to the careless winds. In such silence, there are many voices speaking strange things to the heart which can understand them—speaking sometimes of

heaven, sometimes of earth, but ever in that harmony which comprehends the mingled strains of both.

Was it not happiness enough to sit and listen to these voices, for one who had been long estranged from such sweet intercourse, and to hear them blended too with tones of kindness and affection, almost as strange to her long unaccustomed ear? It might have been enough—perhaps too much, but that, as we have said before, there was a little secret store of anxious care in that young heart—a bitter thought—a sad remembrance now and then of harsh words spoken by a flippant tongue. And there were fears—vague but growing fears—that from the first that fond heart had not chosen well.

“And yet,” Kate always said in her soliloquies, “what am I myself, that I should be so captious and fastidious about his faults? Surely he is good enough for me, and considering the temptations to which he has been exposed, much better than I am myself. If I make more pretension, and assume more, my faults and my deficiencies are in the same proportion more culpable than his. Arnold too,”—and here was Kate’s sheet anchor—“Arnold has always loved him, and *his* noble heart could never value what was worthless in itself.”

Perhaps had Kate been made acquainted with all which passed in Arnold’s mind on the same subject, she would have seen, that like herself, he had his strange misgivings. He too, had first been pleased with Arthur Hamilton as a frank and generous hearted boy, for he *was* generous so far as giving vent, and that is what the world for the most part judges character by. He too had pitied him for the neglect and the many disadvantages of his almost orphan childhood. He too had been softened and overcome a thousand times by the real feel-

ing which evinced itself at times in the character of his friend; but as the impulse of the boy began to require the principle of the man to keep it under proper restraint; as the passions of an impetuous nature began to manifest themselves on a larger scale, and in colours more glaring and distinct; Arnold himself felt often the most painful and serious anxiety with regard to the future conduct and character of his friend; nor could these anxieties be otherwise than increased by the spirit of defiance in which his remonstrances were sometimes received. On the other hand, however, there were moments of frank and unrestrained confidence of heart on the part of his friend, which bound him to his interests afresh, and which afresh convinced him, that it was not the want of better qualities of heart which made him what he was, but the want of thought and principle to regulate the dispositions which he had.

The generosity of Arthur Hamilton, for instance, was that of mere giving, because it was a pleasure to himself to give; it was therefore often as profuse in itself, as it was unwise in the objects upon which it was bestowed. Every other impulse of his nature was acted upon in the same manner, and from being of that order which is generally considered as belonging to a fine, open-hearted, high-spirited youth, accompanied too by a handsome face and graceful person, the wonder would have been greater than it was, had any girl in the situation of Kate Staunton, with a heart to bestow, been able to withstand the real kindness of his manner, and the flattering attentions with which he had for years evinced the same preference for her society above all others.

It must be remembered, too, that Kate was very lonely and almost friendless, occupying a situation in which she

was as little loved, as she was really admired; and also conscious of her own disadvantages in being less beautiful and attractive than many whom she met in society; yet still preferred before them by one who was himself a general favourite in consequence of his pleasant manners, and the gaiety and openness of his disposition, mingled with a good deal of knowledge picked up in his varied observations of men and things.

It would scarcely have been possible to have selected from society a young gentleman more likely than Arthur Hamilton to charm the fancy of an inexperienced girl; and Kate Staunton, with a little more natural shrewdness and good sense than form the average portion of her sex, had still too much of the quick feeling and deep affections of a woman, not to experience a strong tendency towards the most favourable view of such a character when placed in the most flattering and agreeable relation towards herself. These feelings and emotions, mingled with the sympathy of two cheerful and buoyant spirits, had marked their early acquaintance with each other, and these would have been enough for many girls to build an attachment upon; but when intense pity mingled with these feelings, when misfortunes came, and loneliness and poverty cast their dark shadow over that beautiful and noble brow, where care had never made a footprint before, then it was that the bond between them became strengthened by links of adamant, and the devotion of heart which would have been untouched by the highest worldly honours, was called forth by adversity, and made the foundation of an affection which remained yet to be fully proved in its depth and its sincerity.

We are not attempting to justify this attachment in the choice of its object. Kate Staunton was too human to be

always wise. A being who should never err would neither claim our sympathy nor our belief. Neither is their exemption from error that which marks even the characters of highest worth, as characters are found in real life. In fact, so fraught with error is all human conduct, that there exists another rule by which character may be judged more fairly,—it is the conduct *after error has been committed*. From youth to age it is this which speaks the real truth with regard to human character. It is the tear of sorrow, the yielding, the penitence, which proves the real heart of the child. It is the self-conviction, the humility, the willingness to be corrected, which proves the hopefulness of youth. It is the self-examination, the anguish, the penitential prayer, which proves how earnest is the broken-hearted wanderer to return. Even in a worldly point of view, it is the recovery after every failure in discretion which makes the wise and prudent man—it is the quick perception of his own mistakes, perhaps before others have perceived them, and the instant adoption of counteracting measures before any serious consequences have ensued.

How far the lives of the wisest and the best of human beings have been made up of circumstances of this nature, it would be difficult to show. When the best affections of the heart are concerned, the process of reasoning is more difficult—the subject itself being so complicated, as even without the bias of strong feeling, without anything to judge by but the strict rule of right, to be in many instances beyond the reach of human calculation, and therefore needing more than any other that guidance from above which is probably less asked for, or rather less desired here, as a real test, than under any other circumstances in life. When the affections are concerned, there

are often such delicate shades marking the circumstances on either side, that, a little more light here, or a little less shadow there, and that which would have been wrong becomes right, or *vice versa*. A little more principle on one side, for instance, and a little less on the other, and the parties are not unfairly matched: and who shall draw the line? Of course there is *one* line which can be strictly drawn, and happy is it for those who have this true wisdom to direct their steps. It is where religion is all in all; for there can be no happiness, no prudence in any union where this is the case on one side of the compact, and not on the other.

But to return to a case of common prudence, for we fear that Kate Staunton has scarcely advanced so far upon that better path herself, as to find no fitting companionship in one whose steps are not confirmed. We have said she was a Christian girl, but humbly, simply, and almost childishly a Christian still, scarcely daring to believe that she was so, yet dreading immeasurably more to believe that she was not. In this doubtful state, it was not unbecoming—perhaps it would not be so for any one—that she should question within herself in what respect she was better, or had advanced farther, that she should reject the claims of one who had suffered, morally at least, under disadvantages even greater than her own; and if she could but help him—*there* was the great thought—so beautiful, so inspiring, and yet so dangerous!

Knowing the entire devotedness, as well as the rectitude of her own heart on all these points, and suffering daily from the conflict which these contending feelings occasioned, it was doubly painful to poor Kate to have her disinterestedness called in question, to be suspected of a *more than prudent care* about *herself* by one, who of all

the world ought to have been the very last to harbour such a thought. And yet those words of his were ever sounding in her ear—"You are well worth all the care you take of yourself." He had uttered angry and passionate words before, for which she could make charitable allowance, and which indeed she never dwelt upon again; but these were spoken in his cooler moments—nay rather in moments of tenderness and softened feeling, when, if ever in his life, he might have placed implicit reliance in the disinterestedness of her affection. "Can it really be," thought Kate, "that I am a selfish creature after all? It is true I have often been called so, and if I am, it is better far that I should know it; but I scarcely think I deserved that character from him!"

It is more than probable that the words which on one side were the cause of so many bitter thoughts, on the other were scarcely remembered beyond the moment of their utterance; more especially as Arthur Hamilton, after the melancholy catastrophe of his father's death, became an object of universal interest amongst the circle of his friends, many of whom, with but little personal knowledge, exerted themselves in his favour; so that in addition to a considerable advance of money on the part of his uncle, a fund was raised for placing him on the most advantageous terms, as has already been stated, in the office of Mr. Dalrymple, where it was understood that he would qualify himself for the business of an engineer. Where the money came from, Arthur never troubled himself to ask, though his pride would have been severely mortified had he known that it was in any respect regarded by the givers in the light of a *charitable donation*. He would of course have starved, or begged, rather than have accepted such assistance; but it is well for the comfort,

and often preserves the dignity of unthinking characters, that they do not look much into the sources of money, nor make themselves troubles about whence it comes, so long as it is theirs to use as they think best; and thus it is often not so much from ingratitude, as from pure want of thought, that heavy obligations are incurred by inconsiderate people—demanded—presumed upon—and even exhausted—in a manner most repugnant and astounding to those who have had the difficult and laborious task of catering for their unceasing necessities.

In the present instance Arthur Hamilton enjoyed himself exceedingly upon this fund. He first made a very handsome present to Kate Staunton, which she looked at only once, and then closing the casket in which it was secured, never saw nor touched it again. The next thing he did was to urge a small loan upon Arnold for the purchase of a new coat; and the next thing was to make himself master of a large Newfoundland dog, which had to be boarded out at considerable expense, and which could only be indulged with a sight of its master once or twice a week at most.

Such was the commencement of Arthur Hamilton upon his *fund*, and being now in a condition to take his pleasure in the country, he wrote to inform Kate Staunton that on a certain Sunday he should be visiting at his uncle's in the neighbourhood, and proposed in the afternoon of that day making a call at Hatherstone—"only for a few minutes," he said. He "should not trouble the old gentleman; and indeed there would be no need to tell him who was there."

Aware that this might prove a dangerous experiment, and yet anxious for the meeting—aware too that her grandfather about that time of the day was always taking his rest in a distant part of the house; and having in-

formed Margaret of the expected call, Kate wrote instantly a very urgent request that the visit should be made at the precise time which Margaret recommended, and made with all quietness—not by stealth, there was no need for that, as the two families were on calling terms, and Arthur's uncle often sent over to Hatherstone to inquire after the health of Mr. Staunton—but made without the trampling of horses' feet, or loud ringing of bells, or any other disturbances to an invalid ; for Arthur liked nothing better than to gallop up to the very door of a house with half-a-dozen dogs in his train, all bristling up at the sight of other dogs, and disputing their possession of the premises. On such an occasion, and on such a day, Kate had strongly urged a quiet walk across the fields, and as the hour drew near, she began to look from a high window, with some anxiety, in the direction from whence Arthur would have to come.

With some alarm, however, Kate found herself called upon about this time to go and read beside her grandfather. He could not sleep, though resting on a couch in his own quiet chamber, and there was a soothing melody in the voice of Kate Staunton, independently of the interest he felt in a volume which lay upon his table—there was a sweetness and correctness too in her manner of reading, which gave a double charm to any interest which the volume might contain.

Alas for Kate that afternoon ! Her ear was always quick, but now it heard a thousand signals of approach even in the trilling voices of small birds—everything in short—down to the quiet step of Margaret along the corridor seemed burdened with alarming sounds ; and often in a most inappropriate part of a sentence she suddenly stopped and listened ; until her grandfather, thinking her dull at

comprehending the sense of what she read, explained the meaning to her, and so she was enabled to take breath and read again.

There are few seasons more perfectly still than a sabbath afternoon spent by a quiet family in the country. All the servants at Hatherstone except one or two were accustomed at this time to attend the village church, and the mansion was so large and massive, that the movements of the few members of the family remaining at home were scarcely heard. Even the closing of a door seemed only to awaken slumbering echoes which slept again, and the domestic animals, of which there were no small number under Margaret's care, were accustomed to take the tone of the family, and droop the wing, or doze away the afternoon, according to their different habits and places in creation.

It was in the midst then of this universal hush that Kate sat reading to her grandfather, when all at once the mastiff in the yard began to bark, and suddenly his deep-toned voice was answered by smaller ones within the kitchen and the hall. As suddenly a terrible screaming was heard amongst the fowls—the cackling of geese and hens, and most vociferous quacking of innumerable ducks—a plunge into the moat below the back windows of the house; and then a whoop, a whistle, and a shout, which left poor Kate without the shadow of a doubt as to what had taken place, though wondering almost to agony what would come on the next shifting of the scene.

But there was not much time to think, for in another moment the door of Mr. Staunton's own room was invaded, and in rushed a huge Newfoundland dog, upsetting a small table with precious medicines, and other preparations for comfort and refreshment, all systematically arranged by Margaret's careful hand.

The scene which took place after this most daring and unwelcome intrusion can be more easily imagined than described. Of course Kate Staunton was called upon to explain so far as her knowledge went, and she did so, without flinching from any important particular, though her grandfather's brow grew darker and darker at every word. Not that he even then entertained the slightest suspicion of more than a common acquaintance between Kate and Arthur; but he did not like the acquaintance even in its most indifferent form—he never had liked the Hamiltons—he never had approved of the habits of the father, and he liked the son's as little. Even the melancholy death of the elder Hamilton had not softened his prejudices, for he could not imagine any but the weakest of minds yielding to the temptation of self-destruction. Pity did very little towards softening Mr. Staunton's mind when it was accompanied by contempt; and he made no scruple to assert that he did despise the Hamiltons—root and branch.

Intruded upon in his home as Mr. Staunton was on this luckless day, during the most secluded and sacred portion of his life—interrupted in his serious meditations by such an outburst of distracting confusion—wantonly insulted, as he felt himself to be, he had as little patience as mercy to exercise towards the impetuous intruder, whose name he had soon drawn forth from the blushing and downcast Kate.

“What *can* be the meaning of all this uproar?” Mr. Staunton had asked in his most indignant tone of voice, and Kate had answered very meekly, but without a moment's hesitation, “I believe it is Arthur Hamilton come to call on me.”

“On you?—on you, child?” Mr. Staunton had asked—“what can he want with you?” And then it was that

Kate, almost for the only time in her life, was guilty of a little evasion, for she answered, "He is in the same office with Arnold, and I expected he would come to tell me how all things are going on."

"All things going on," exclaimed Mr. Staunton, still more eagerly than before—"and you expected him! What can all this mean? This will never do in my house, I can tell you!"

By this time Margaret had entered the room, and seeing her husband so ruffled and excited, her anxious mind took instant alarm, and beckoning for Kate to withdraw, she endeavoured in her usual gentle manner to calm down the storm, assuring Mr. Staunton of what was really the truth—and she herself knew not but it was the whole truth—that the young gentleman had come with a message of inquiry from his uncle, and that she had sharply rebuked him for his want of consideration in coming at so unsuitable a time, and in such a manner.

"But Kate?" said Mr. Staunton—"what does he want with Kate?"

Here again Margaret interposed, and soothed down every suspicion which it was in her power to allay; and she did this with more effect, because she entertained no suspicions herself, but thought it perfectly natural, that being associated with Arnold Lee, who had always been like a brother to Kate, he should be commissioned with messages for her, independently of the accustomed inquiries respecting the health of the invalid. Margaret saw nothing in this—believed nothing, beyond the plain fact itself, which she thought the more reasonable, because she was acquainted with many circumstances connected with family affairs, which had been studiously kept from her husband's knowledge; and by degrees she succeeded in

calming those irritated feelings, which on many occasions seriously threatened, not only the health, but the life of Mr. Staunton.

What took place in the apartment below, or how Kate managed to dismiss her unthinking visitor, and how she had first endeavoured to impress upon his mind the importance of exercising more consideration for others—how he had laughed when she attempted to describe to him the explosion occasioned by the rush of his great dog into Mr. Staunton's private room—how her own heart had sunk under the impossibility of convincing him, that while it was to him a capital joke, it might be a serious calamity to others—must all be left to that secret record of the experience of human life, which often contains deep truths of more real importance to its happiness and misery, than all the outward actions of mankind.

CHAPTER XII.



UT there begins to be a serious question agitating the clear and honourable mind of Kate Staunton. Is she not holding within her heart of hearts a secret, which by long concealment, and by the necessity which such concealment involves, may grow to be a *guilty* secret? Is it not already a guilty secret, because she is receiving every day a degree of kindness and confidence, which would in all probability be withdrawn, were the whole truth disclosed? How far then was Kate prepared to make her secret known, or how far was she justified in keeping it still concealed?

Ah! there are positions in human life in which it is very difficult to be more than half right and half wrong; and it is the very fact of being satisfied to be half right and half wrong, which so fatally brings down the standard of social morality to the low estimate of selfish and contracted minds. It is the very fact of being satisfied on some points to have good intentions—nay, even religious scruples, where they do not interfere with inclination; and on others to be blind—indifferent—or more frequently prompt to lay hold of any precedent or excuse by which self-interest may be served, or inclination gratified, at the expense of strict integrity—it is this half virtue in practice, connected

with a high profession in theory, which does more real mischief in the world, than the open vices of the most degraded. Vice in this form appears odious to most minds, and unpolitic and dangerous to all; but half virtue is often very plausible and attractive, because it satisfies a beclouded conscience with the semblance of being all that religion itself requires.

If ever in her life Kate Staunton was in danger of falling into this delusion, it was under her present circumstances—for why, she asked of her heart, should she intrude an unwelcome and agitating subject upon her grandfather's mind at this critical period of his existence; or how should she ever be able to forgive herself if any abrupt or uncalled for disclosure on her part should endanger his life, or even bring upon him any extraordinary irritation or distress? The late accident which had occurred in connection with Arthur Hamilton had sufficiently convinced her that he would not be able to bear much from that quarter; and now that his confidence and kindness towards herself were fully restored, why should she disturb the calm which all were so truly enjoying.

It was indeed a difficult question, and might have agitated a mind of more experience than that of poor Kate Staunton; more especially as there appeared to be no immediate necessity for taking any decided step in the affair at all. For after once venting his wrath and indignation against the intruder, and after ascertaining that he was actually gone from the premises on that luckless afternoon, Mr. Staunton seldom alluded to the subject, but occupied himself as now was his usual habit, either in quiet walks about his garden and grounds, or in listening to Kate as she either chatted with him in her cheerful, plea-

sant manner, or read aloud from one of his favourite books.

In these walks, which were very slow, and performed with much difficulty, no less than in his reading and conversation, Mr. Staunton found an ever welcome and no less willing companion in his granddaughter, whose natural good sense, shrewd observation, and general tone of mind appeared peculiarly adapted to his own disposition, and which consequently rendered her at the same time more pleasing to him, and more capable of doing him good, than any of his former companions had been.

All this was very pleasant to Margaret, who looked with never-failing satisfaction upon the growing intimacy between her husband and the orphan girl, who above all other members of the family, as the child of his only son, appeared to her to possess the strongest claims upon his kindness and protection. Beyond this, Margaret became aware that an important purpose was gaining ground in her husband's mind, of which she had frequent hints, without being directly consulted on the subject, and which it was thus in her power to help forward, without appearing exactly to do so bold a thing as to advise.

This growing purpose was to leave Kate Staunton the sole proprietor and inheritor of his extensive property. As the only child of his only son, there appeared to be both reason and justice in the plan; but above and beyond this, Michael Staunton looked with more hope, and with infinitely greater satisfaction, to the character and disposition of Kate herself, as it now became every day more distinctly revealed to his observation.

It had been a great source of uneasiness to Mr. Staunton under his late illness, that he could discover no method at once just to others, and hopeful in itself, for the bestow-

ment of his hereditary possessions. One by one he had dwelt upon the character of his grandchildren, such as he imagined them to be, without a shadow of satisfaction; for though Margaret endeavoured faithfully and unremittingly to throw in a favourable word for Arnold Lee, whenever it was possible to do so, Michael Staunton was one who required to see with his own eyes, before he could be made to believe with his own heart; and, as has already been recorded, the sight of his own eyes had been so far disadvantageous to Arnold while a boy, that no evidence from other sources had yet been able to do away with the strong prejudice he had conceived against him.

What to do with his property was then a most puzzling and difficult question to one who naturally loved it too well to wish that it should be thrown into worthless or idle hands. Michael Staunton loved justice, common sense, and prudence better than he loved mere kindness—though he could be kind enough when it suited his humour to be so—and he had a strong feeling that it was not just in any man to bequeath his property in such a manner, as that it would be likely to be squandered away and do no good to any one. With regard to the Ashleys he felt assured that this would be the case, for it was a well-known axiom with him, that those who had not taken care of their own property would not be likely to take care of other people's; and with regard to the Lees, even without being acquainted with the darkest passages in their experience, he had too many fears and apprehensions to trust anything of importance to their discretion. Separated as he had been for some years from Kate Staunton, and hearing nothing very favourable of her from Mrs. Ashley, he had almost ceased to hope that she would ever fill any high place in his esteem, whatever she might in his

affection; and under these pressing difficulties, he had formed a plan with regard to the disposal of the Hatherstone estate after his death, which, though by no means satisfactory to himself, appeared to be the best which circumstances justified him in adopting.

All things however were now changed, or changing, in relation to these arrangements; and the summer months, which passed so rapidly in the sweet retirement of Hatherstone, were not yet gone, when business of a very grave and important character appeared to be frequently occupying the attention of Michael Staunton, in connection with a solicitor who generally conducted his business affairs.

On one of these busy days Kate was surprised to be called into her grandfather's private room to have her age inquired about, with some other particulars which appeared to her exceedingly unimportant; and she was equally surprised at the same time to observe the marked and respectful attention of the solicitor as he plied her with a few questions relating to money matters, to which, as it happened, she was able to reply with promptness and with a tolerable degree of information and common sense.

At last something very near the truth flashed into the mind of Kate Staunton herself; and destitute and friendless as she had hitherto been during the greater portion of her life, the prospect of independence and comfort, and the means of being useful to others, came to her, as it would to any one, with a very reasonable amount of satisfaction. Sadly did she want some friend with whom to speak on the subject; but it was too delicate in itself, or rather in its relation to Margaret, to allow of her being the confidant on this occasion. Sadly did she want to know to what amount this future good was likely to be hers; for

as to contemplating in her own person the possession of the whole estate, she was as far from that, as from desiring it. A comfortable independence was all which Kate had ever pictured to herself as the foundation of her future lot, and to share that with Margaret in the peaceful retirement of Hatherstone, appeared to her girlish fancy at the present moment as the height of human happiness.

The great settlement of his affairs which Michael Staunton about this time was engaged in accomplishing, appeared to all parties to have been most opportune, for, whether from the excitement it occasioned, or from any less obvious cause, he had scarcely concluded this most important business, before he experienced a slight attack of his former malady, less severe at the time, but accompanied by far more serious consequences to his general health. Indeed from this moment Michael Staunton became a confirmed invalid, incapable of his accustomed exercise in the open air, and for the most part confined to his own chamber and an adjoining room, where Margaret and Kate spent many watchful hours. Not unfrequently, however, he preferred having them nearer, even while unable to take any part in their conversation, and then their place was at a deep bay-window, where the light of the afternoon sun streamed in, and shed a rich and glowing tint upon the old carved oak, throwing into deeper shade the thick folds of heavy drapery which hung around the room. Here, on a small table, Margaret's bible always lay ; and here she solaced her mind by short moments of thoughtful reading ; like one who repairs to a sweet fountain for accustomed refreshment, and then with renewed vigour pursues the labour of a toilsome day.

Amongst other unfavourable symptoms, the invalid who claimed such unremitting care, was at this time troubled

with increasing numbness in his limbs, always agreeably allayed by the friction of those kind and gentle hands which were ever ready in his service. It happened one evening that Kate was employed in this manner, seated on a low stool beside her grandfather, who reclined upon a couch, when suddenly he asked her what she would do if she found herself the possessor of a large amount of property.

"I would take a long time to think before I did anything," replied Kate; and the answer so entirely commended itself to her grandfather's views, that he evinced more than usual satisfaction, and called her a good girl, telling her she deserved to be rich, with many other flattering commendations.

"I have for some time been wishing to tell you a piece of information," Mr. Staunton went on to say, "but was afraid how you might hear it; but now I see you are a prudent girl, perhaps I may venture to trust you."

Kate knew not what to say. Much as she had previously wished to know the mind of her grandfather with regard to the disposal of his property, she now experienced a kind of dread which made her shrink from hearing what he seemed about to disclose. She had no choice, however, for Mr. Staunton having made up his mind to reveal the whole truth, went on to state that he had left her by his will the sole proprietor of all the Hatherstone property.

"And Mrs. Staunton?" asked Kate.

"Mrs. Staunton and I perfectly understand each other," replied her grandfather. "Do you think I would leave her unprovided for? Do you think, either, that she is the woman to be happy in the possession of wealth, more especially if she felt there were others who had a juster claim to it? No, no; you may leave the care of Margaret to me. I know her disposition best."

“ But my cousins ? ” Kate ventured to say.

“ Your cousins,” replied Mr. Staunton, with an altered tone, “ are remembered to the full amount of their deserts. You had better not say much about them.” And Kate required no further caution, for a cloud came over the brow of her grandfather, which it was not easy to chase away ; and she was obliged to win him back again to composure, by talking of the Hatherstone property in so businesslike a manner, that he might almost have imagined himself conversing with Thomas, his confidential servant.

During the course of this conversation Kate Staunton ascertained that the amount of property likely at a very early period to fall into her possession, far exceeded what she had previously imagined it to be ; and, listening to these details, there awoke within her mind a kind of natural exultation in the thought of how much she should thus be enabled to do for others, as well as how much to enjoy herself.

All this was perfectly natural, and we have never from the first pretended that Kate Staunton was more than human. We have even confessed to a disposition on her part to a certain care of herself, which some call *selfishness* ; but which, at all events, a young lady may be very selfish, and not possess. Kate had been sorely tried too in the school of dependence, and had often been compelled to look painfully into a future, entirely destitute of money, and consequently poor in friends. It was perfectly natural then that pleasant thoughts and calculations should arise in connection with the prospect which now lay smiling before her, and that without one single feeling at variance with the real affection she entertained for her grandfather ; for to convey an idea that Kate experienced anything like eagerness to enter upon these possessions,

would be as unjust, as to say that she did not feel the distant prospect very pleasant.

Kate Staunton knew too well that between the present moment, and the realization of this prospect, a deep and awful gulf must intervene—that death alone could seal her title to possession; and poor as she had ever been in friends, it was no slight shadow which fell upon the scene, whenever she reflected that in gaining worldly wealth, and with it a degree of social distinction, to which she was by no means indifferent, she must inevitably lose one who had hitherto been her best of earthly friends.

These were thoughts of such a nature as to keep down every sense of undue or unfeeling exultation with such a character as Kate Staunton's, and in addition to these was the grave responsibility connected with such a worldly position, with many painful considerations turning towards those who would undoubtedly regard themselves as unjustly dispossessed. So that, setting the evil against the good, Kate was able to see even now, that just in proportion to her distinction in a social point of view, would be the difficulties of her path, and, it might be, the envy and ill-will which her position would call forth.

On all these points Kate Staunton was as reasonable and right minded a girl as could easily be found; and had these been all, her lot in life, even as the possessor of envied property, might have been comparatively an easy one. Had these been all, the path of duty might to her have been neither doubtful nor particularly difficult to tread. But mingling with these thoughts there was one consideration of overwhelming importance—one ever-present conviction which sometimes rushed upon her mind with such accumulated force as to send the warm blood burning to her cheeks, and then again to fix upon her

lips an ashy paleness, making them speechless and trembling. It was her love—poor Kate! without that love, how safe and easy would have been her course. She had common sense enough, and principle, and firmness somewhat beyond the usual share. But for her love, how did it seem that she could guide her fortunes with a moderate grasp, and prudent hand. And yet would she have been without that love? Ah! no; it was the very thing which gave prosperity its secret value, wealth its high estimate, and rank, place, and distinction, their great worth.

Yes, after all, Kate Staunton was a very woman, and deeply in her bosom lay the cherished thought—“*it is for him*. For me it matters little; but for him,—Oh! what a blessing such a mine of wealth will be! And I the giver, too—I, the poor, plain girl whom he was generous enough to love without a farthing of my own! Now I can make him rich—distinguished—everything he ought to be!” Alas! poor Kate, how did her reason and her foresight fail her here. It was her one weak-point—true it was only *one*; but in itself how much more dangerous than any other, seeing the amount of risk which woman often throws into this *one*.

Ah! they were deep, but most delicious musings, in which Kate sometimes indulged through the long summer evenings about this period of her life. But then!—Truly, indeed, might she have said—“But then? I hate but then!” In her case how much did these simple words suggest? *But then* was it *right* to dream on as she was dreaming? Was it *right* to keep her secret untold? Was it *right* to permit her grandfather to take such a step without being aware of the consequences it involved? Was it *right* to receive the promise of his property in her own name, at the same time pleasing herself with the

conviction that she should bestow it upon another, and that other deemed by him unworthy?

"Oh, that he had not told me!" was the mental exclamation of Kate, when revolving these thoughts in her mind. "But he *has* told me," she invariably said immediately afterwards, "so that the case admits of no question on that point."

Again, as was extremely natural, Kate persuaded herself that in her grandfather's present state of health, it would unquestionably terminate his existence, should she disclose to him the real truth. It was but waiting quietly—permitting him to die in peace—and then acting prudently herself. She could conform to his wishes in their spirit, if not their letter, and on no account involve his property in an imprudent manner. There were years of trial yet to come; and during that time, her lover would have fully proved, either his good principles, or his want of them; and she would only have to act accordingly.

But had Kate Staunton a happy or contented mind while arguing with herself in this manner? By no means. She had seldom felt less satisfied with herself, than one afternoon, when she and Margaret shared the recess in the old window together, and while Michael Staunton slept, spoke in low tones of voice which scarcely broke the dreamy stillness of the shadowy room. Margaret, indeed, seemed not disposed for conversation, but sate, with eyes bent seriously upon her open book, until disturbed by an unusually heavy sigh from her young companion, who stood beside her, leaning against a projection in the oaken wall, and gazing out upon the distant landscape where the sunlight turned its waving corn to seas of gold.

It was Margaret's custom, whenever her attention was called away from her book, to lay her finger on the pas-

sage to which she desired to return ; and hearing this deep sigh, she raised her head, and with her finger so placed, looked anxiously into the countenance of her companion, asking, in her accustomed simple manner—"What is it, dear?"

"Do you think," said Kate, "there are any circumstances in which it is allowable to deceive?"

"I think," replied Margaret, "there are cases, in illness, for instance, or cases of disordered mind, in which it is not necessary to tell all, unless we are asked."

"You think it allowable in illness, do you?" said Kate, catching eagerly at the words.

"It is a very difficult question," replied Margaret, "and I should not like to be made to answer it in full. I myself have had many trials of that kind."

"And how have you managed under them?" enquired Kate.

"Sometimes well, sometimes not so well, and sometimes very badly," replied Margaret. "But I have always found that when I managed well, it was not I, but One higher than I, who managed for me ; and I never was able to get even tolerably well through, except when I prayed earnestly to be stripped of every selfish consideration, and so was brought down to put my own wishes, and my own will, entirely out of the question. I have always found too, that where I had a purpose of my own to serve, I had tenfold need for prayer, and for those deep searchings of heart which are as necessary as prayer, when we desire to do simply what is right, and yet have a strong interest blinding our eyes to what *is* right."

"Oh! that he had not told me!" said Kate inaudibly, for she knew too well what would be the decision of Margaret, to make her the confidante of her present diffi-



culty, without having previously determined to adopt whatever advice might be given, "If he had but allowed me to remain in happy ignorance of his intentions, I might, perhaps, have gone on with a clear conscience, and an upright mind. But now!—I have no shelter—no excuse. I cannot let him die with this acted falsehood unrevealed. His very wealth, on such conditions, would be turned to bitterness and poison in possession."

Kate Staunton absolutely shuddered as these thoughts passed through her mind, and as the dim twilight gathered all around, her countenance grew pale, and almost ghastly. Margaret, unable longer to pursue her reading, kindly took the hand of her companion in her own, but started at its coldness. It seemed as if her very life-blood was congealing—as if the strong current of all her bright and joyous thoughts was forcibly arrested, and a sheet of snow wrapped suddenly around her warm, young heart. And yet it must be done; the sooner now, the better. This very night her grandfather might die—this very night might seal her final sentence, and stamp her forehead with the mark of falsehood and of shame for ever.

"Margaret," she said, "I must be left alone with my grandfather this evening."

Margaret silently, and without any appearance of curiosity, complied; and Kate was left to listen for the first symptoms of his awaking from his accustomed repose.

But how did those moments of intense and anxious listening swell into lengthened hours; for there is nothing so tedious as to await the fitting time for accomplishing a painful and difficult determination, after it has once been really formed. Delay beforehand is most welcome, afterwards it becomes nothing less than torture. And in this agony of impatience Kate was standing, when sud-

denly she heard her grandfather breathing her name in tones of kindness and affection. Scarcely knowing whether he yet slept, or whether he called her to him, she hastened to the side of his bed, and found him just awaking, as he told her, from a pleasant dream.

"I thought," said he, "that I had been long dead, and was in heaven, and there bright angels came and told me of your safe arrival; and I saw you coming—pale, and weary, and so changed!—Why you *are* pale, child. What is the matter!"

"Nothing, grandfather," said Kate, "but tell me more about your dream."

"I don't remember much," the old man went on to say. "Dreams have more to do with impressions than events. Mine has left a feeling that we were both glad to meet again—so glad, I cannot tell you; and that you came to me like one who had been entrusted with all I had left on earth, and had kept it faithfully."

"I hope I shall be faithful," said Kate, very seriously.

"I hope you will," responded her grandfather, "for you are left with great responsibilities; and you will need safe advisers."

"I must first be faithful, now," said Kate.

"How? What, child, do you mean?" said her grandfather, starting up as if alarmed.

"Oh, don't disturb yourself!" said Kate. "It is a very simple duty that I have to perform. Do try, dear sir, to bear with me patiently. I would not irritate or distress you for the world; and, if you are not calm, I shall never be able to tell you what is on my mind."

"Be very quick, then, child," said Mr. Staunton, "you know my patience will not hold out long.—You flurry me with this suspense.—What is it, child?"

"I think it right, under present circumstances, to tell you," said Kate, "that I have entered into an engagement of marriage."

"Marriage!—you?—what?—how?" exclaimed Michael Staunton, in a perfect fever of indignant rage, and yet scarcely comprehending the full import of the words which fell so unexpectedly upon his ear. "Surely this also is a dream. I cannot understand you.—Speak again."

"I am under an engagement to marry some one not very likely to be agreeable to you, and therefore I think it right to tell you, in order that you may make any alteration in your will which you think desirable."

"Who is it?" said Mr. Staunton, in his sternest and most imperative manner.

Kate hesitated. She was absolutely terrified, and her tongue felt wholly incapable of uttering that offensive name.

"Tell me who it is, I command you!" said Michael Staunton. "I will have no prevarication. I *will* know the whole truth, and I will know it now."

Kate grew more alarmed. Her apprehensions were of the most terrific nature. Immediate death to her grandfather appeared to her the most probable consequence of what she was about to say.

"Tell me this instant," repeated Michael Staunton, and he struck his clenched hand upon the table with a violence that was perfectly frightful in one whom every one believed to be approaching the confines of the grave.

Kate pressed her hands upon her eyes, endeavouring to shut out the light; and her lips murmured something wholly unintelligible to that impatient and impetuous old man.

"Speak—louder, child," was his angry exclamation, as

he thundered again upon the table which stood beside his bed.

Kate made another attempt. It was more successful; but her grandfather would not believe the evidence of his senses, until she told him distinctly, and in a manner that was almost solemn in its sad earnestness, that it was actually to Arthur Hamilton that she had pledged herself as his future wife.

"Then you are a fool, after all," groaned Michael Staunton, as he fell back upon his pillow, "and not the girl I took you for; and I must make a different will, for never shall a branch of that worthless and degraded family be planted in my place at Hatherstone."

The great conflict was now over with poor Kate. The struggle had done its work. While that was going on, her eyes were hot and tearless; she had no power to weep. But now her very limbs seemed to relax from the strong effort she had made, and tears unthought of and unfelt before, came thick and fast into her eyes; and when her grandfather spoke to her again she could not answer him, nor do anything but sob and weep.

It was a case, however, in which tears had no power to soften him. The girl who could do such a thing, deserved to weep—deserved to suffer—to grovel down—to die! He felt no mercy for such folly; but yet he was not wholly credulous. Kate, as a wilful, wayward child, might have committed such an act of indiscretion; but now she must know better than to adhere to such a reckless, mad, and guilty purpose.

"Was it not so?" he asked, in something like a tone of kindness; and for a moment Kate was almost tempted to say "yes." It was only for a moment, however, and it was but girlish fear, and love, and reverence together that

wrought upon her mind, until it quailed beneath the dread of giving so much pain and trouble to one who had supplied to her the place of friend and father. But, no; she yielded not. It was not a light thing to love as she was loving, and she would not sacrifice her truth for any slavish fear of consequences to herself, come in what form they might.

"No, grandfather," said she, with such a firm, decided look and tone, that any one who heard her would have known persuasion hopeless. "No; I have not changed in anything on that point, nor have I any thought of changing. If I *could* change—could think or feel in any manner different from what I do, I *would* to give you satisfaction, but it is not in my power,"

"Is that your final answer then, ungrateful girl?" said Michael Staunton.

"It is," replied Kate.

"Go from my presence, then," said her grandfather; and as he uttered these words a shadow seemed to spread itself over his countenance almost as dark as death.

Kate in an instant hastened from the room, and calling Margaret to take her place, it was soon known throughout the house, that within that shrouded chamber the wealthy lord of Hatherstone was lying helpless and feeble as a child, while for hours his life seemed hanging by a thread.

Immediate alarm was spread, and every accustomed and necessary means resorted to; and all the while Kate Staunton was feeling almost like a murderer. Busy feet were hastening to and fro, kind hands were helping wherever help was needed; but she was lonely in her own sad chamber, shut out from the sweet offices of help and kindness.

There is no greater trial in the whole range of human experience, than to have and feel in relation to our fellow creatures as if we had done wrong, in consequence of having faithfully discharged a difficult and painful duty. Yet even this has sometimes to be borne by those who live for duty, rather than for pleasure.

CHAPTER XIII.



AS to any pleasant thoughts which Kate Staunton might have entertained on the subject of worldly distinction, it was all over with her now. No doubt she *had* indulged in pleasant thoughts on this subject, for she was human—no doubt she had indulged in thoughts of greater moment, and of more intense interest than if they had centered in herself, for she was a woman; and here lay the great secret of her trial. It was for *him*, far more than for herself, that she had thought, wished, aspired; and it was for *him* that she had lost everything, except her own consciousness of integrity and truth.

To what extent she was compensated for her loss by that consciousness, perhaps it would be unwise to ask. The human heart has two distinct modes of feeling, one for itself, the other for the cause or the principles which it pledges itself to uphold; and happy indeed is that being, and singular as happy, to whom it is permitted to gratify these two distinct capacities of feeling by one and the same course of action.

Often, and silently, did Kate stand watching now beside the old bay-window, looking out upon the glowing landscape, the fields of waving corn, the woods, and winding

footpaths, cottages, and orchards, all spread before her, rich in their wealth of beauty; and of these, how much might have been her own? the gift of love, too—of natural and almost parental love. To have held all this by free gift and lawful right in her own hands would have been much; but to have bestowed it upon *him*, how immeasurably more!

It had been a great shock to old Michael Staunton to encounter this perverse and obstinate spirit in the way of carrying out his favourite plans; and to meet, in the object of so much partial and tender affection, with a preoccupied heart, whose own affections were bestowed in a manner equally repugnant to his tastes and opposed to his ideas of prudence and right feeling. The only thing upon which he congratulated himself, and that was a source of real satisfaction, was the fact of the discovery having been made in time—in time, as he said, to save his property from waste and ruin, and his name from everlasting disgrace.

Still the old man was fearfully shaken; and while contemplating the necessity of rousing himself again to undertake a fresh arrangement of his affairs, it was but too evident that exhausted nature would barely sustain him under this last effort; if, indeed, it did not fail before the final arrangements should be completed.

Throughout the whole household at Hatherstone, there was nothing now but serious faces and grave movements to be observed. The cheerful voice of the entire family seemed hushed in the silence of Kate Staunton; for she was necessarily silent, under a deep impression of the importance of what she was doing—perhaps destroying the precious life of one who had supplied to her the place both of parent and of friend—perhaps shortening

the days of one who had loved and esteemed her so highly as to trust her with all he had possessed on earth. And for what? Ah! there was the trying question—if, after all, *he* should fail her—should not prove himself to be what she was hoping and believing? Yet, better a thousand times, that he should fail her as a poor and friendless girl, than after she had made him the master of more extensive resources to abuse or to destroy.

Such were the stronger convictions by which Kate Staunton was supported, and yet it was hard to watch those preparations going on which were the signal of her disinherittance. It was hard to watch the silent sorrow of her grandfather, now that the great explosion of his wrath had spent itself upon her head. It was hard to stand aloof without assisting one so feeble; and yet, to offer her officious hand seemed more like mockery than real kindness. It was hard in every way, look where she would, think what she might, or struggle as she had the power; it was still hard, because she was not sure that the great sacrifice she was now making was in a righteous cause. She had therefore no counsellor but her own fond woman's heart. She would not have dared to ask for counsel of any human being, not even of the kind Margaret; for she was not yet prepared to act, except according to the dictates of her own affection.

Thus then, perplexed and agonised, but still devoid of human help, Kate Staunton stood in silence by the old bay-window, sometimes gazing on vacancy, at others on the gorgeous landscape; but more frequently with eyes intent upon the line of road along which that messenger, so fatal to her hopes, would travel. All things were now in readiness. Her grandfather sat, propped with pillows, by a table covered with parchment, plans, and papers,

and the servants trod on tip-toe, as they came and went, all feeling as if some great event was about to be transacted, though they knew not what.

He came at last, that messenger of doom. As Kate stood watching, there was first a speck seen on the distant road, growing so rapidly, that soon the trampling horses, and the rushing wheels became distinguishable, and on, the carriage came, like fate, so swift and sure. Kate *felt* it coming, rather than beheld it; for hot tears were now scalding and swelling in her eyes; and she was all alone beneath the eye of Heaven—so young, and poor, and unadvised, and not quite sure that she was right. And yet her truth failed not. She heard the close approach of carriage wheels, the tramp of horses' feet, voices of recognition, the clap of massive doors, the official tread of one "dressed in a little brief authority," formal announcements of his coming, and then low, murmuring sounds in an adjoining room; and then she pressed her hands upon her eyes, and shut out everything, but silent secret communion with her own heart.

Not that Kate Staunton for a moment contemplated the possibility of relaxing in her fixed determination. Moment after moment, she knew and felt it was not yet too late. Even to the very last, until that carriage rolled away again, she might relent, and soothe the heart of that old dying man, and be again his favourite child. Bearing his name, she yet might bear his worldly honours, might stand apart above the low necessities of hard and struggling life; even she might then command admirers, might dispense her favours with a liberal hand, and fill a high and envied place amongst mankind. Quick as lightning came these thoughts, and worse than these a thousand times, to one who keenly felt the touch of human kindness, who

had been desolate so long, and who was herself so social and warm-hearted to her kindred and her friends—worse than all, was the strong impulse simply to regain her grandfather's lost favour—to ask again the fond parental pressure of his hand upon her head; and more than that, to ask, with unoffending conscience, for his blessing ere he breathed his last.

It seemed to Kate as if her heart beat audibly, as these quick thoughts rushed like a torrent through her mind; all so far possible, that by a few short steps, and a few simple words—by the mere effort of a moment, all might yet be realised. And still she moved not, changed not—either in thought, or purpose; but stood like one of the carved images beside her, almost as immoveable, until the sun went down, and evening shadows closed upon the landscape, and a general hush and dimness fell around; and then she silently sank down in Margaret's seat, and leaned her head upon that open book, and wept again.

Long had Kate remained unconsciously in the same attitude, and not aware how densely had the darkness closed her in, when suddenly awakening sounds disturbed her reverie. Again there was the tread of passing feet, the opening and closing of many doors; again the trampling of horses, and the rush of wheels, and all was over. Kate Staunton was a disinherited, poor orphan girl, who had made her own free choice of being true to a thoughtless, wayward lover, in preference to being the possessor of wealth, and influence, and honourable distinction.

“I suppose it is all over now;” said Kate, looking up as Margaret entered the room with a light, and at first started back, surprised at finding any one alone there at such an hour.

"How is my grandfather?" Kate continued. "Do you think I might go to him now?"

"I really don't know what to say," replied Margaret, with a look of more than usual concern. "It has been a sad business, altogether. I don't know that I ever saw your grandfather so cut up by anything that has occurred in his family. Angry, I have seen him, often—the more's the pity that he should have been so often vexed, and that I myself should not have managed better; but grieved, and sorrowful, and altogether shaken as he seems now, I never have seen him before."

"Is he alone?" asked Kate.

"I left him so," replied Margaret, "but I must be back again in a moment; for to tell the truth, I don't think him in a state to be left to-night."

"Let me go first," said Kate; and she rose and passed by Margaret with a determination which left her no choice.

On arriving at the door of the adjoining room, Kate Staunton hesitated a moment, for her hand trembled so that she feared to touch the handle of the door. She soon perceived, however, that it had been left open, and pushing at it gently, she was able to obtain a clear view of the interior of the apartment, where the old man still sat beside the table, though now turned more towards a glowing fire which shed a bright light upon his emaciated figure, and upon the heaps of papers still lying closely piled in separate parcels beside him.

Kate fancied as she stood and gazed, that a troubled expression was upon her grandfather's face. She fancied even that tears were in his eyes; but in all probability it was her own imagination only which conjured up this last idea; for aged eyes are long in being made to weep. At

all events, her own heart was melted, and her own eyes were dim. Her voice too trembled as she addressed her grandfather; when, vainly endeavouring to speak to him in her accustomed tone, she asked his permission to do for him some unimportant, but familiar service.

Michael Staunton started at the sound of her voice, as if awaking from some deep reverie; and in his usual manner, when anything ruffled him, answered hastily, "No, child; no, not now. Margaret does everything I want."

"But are you not weary?" Kate ventured to enquire. "May I not rub your ancles to-night, as I always do?"

"Not to-night," said Michael Staunton, rather sternly.

It was impossible to misunderstand his manner and his tone. Kate felt that she was not wished for; and yet she could not go. A painful apprehension crossed her mind, as she stood gazing on the old man's forehead, that looked unusually pale—perhaps he would not long be sensible to her approach, nor feel her gentle touch, nor know the depth of her affection; and, sinking down upon the low stool where she often sat beside him, she drew herself, almost imperceptibly, close to his knee, and took his feeble, drooping hand in hers.

"Grandfather," said Kate, "you are not well to-night."

"How should I be well?" was the abrupt reply; but it was spoken in faltering accents, and the hand she had so gently taken in her own was not withdrawn.

Kate Staunton felt at that moment as if a word of kindness, an expression of forgiveness from her grandfather, would be more precious than his whole fortune; and,

come what might, she ventured on, for her young heart was aching to be reconciled.

"Grandfather," she said, pressing the feeble hand first to her lips, then to her weeping eyes, "have you forgiven me?"

"Forgiven you, child?" said Michael Staunton, "I am almost a dying man. How dare I think of entering into the presence of my God without having forgiven every one?"

"But I want your especial forgiveness for myself;" said Kate. "It is enough for you that you have forgiven all mankind; but it is not enough for me, unless you say that you have forgiven me above all, because I have offended more than all."

"Kate," said her grandfather, and now the hand was laid caressingly upon her head, "my own poor Kate, you know not how I could have loved you!"

"Yes, I do, grandfather," said Kate, burying her face upon his knee, and sobbing bitterly.

"I loved you from your childhood," the old man went on to say. "I never could love many people, but some were very dear to me, and you were one."

"And you do forgive me, then?"

"You have grieved me very sorely, child."

"Ah! say that you forgive me—that you pity me!"

"Why should I pity you?"

"Because I shall be so very lonely."

"You might have had many friends."

"Perhaps I am like you, grandfather, and cannot love many; but care too much for one or two."

"There lies your danger. Ah! Kate, you little know what you are doing. You'll think of me sometimes in days to come, when I am in my grave, and wish you had

listened to an old man's counsel, rather than a young one's flattery."

"Indeed it is not flattery, grandfather."

"What is it then that blinds you to the truth?"

"What truth?"

"The awful truth that you are a lost and wretched girl!"

"Ah! do not say such fearful words. I am not lost—I never can be lost, while God in mercy watches over me."

"But *is* He watching over you?"

"I hope so."

"Child! you are deceiving yourself, as many thousands have done to their ruin."

"Perhaps I am; but one thing I want to tell you, grandfather; and here I say it earnestly, solemnly, and from my very heart, that come what may in after life, I never will connect myself with Arthur Hamilton more intimately than now, unless I know him to be an honourable, upright, and God-fearing man."

"And how should you know?"

"Because I am very watchful, and more jealous of his character, than of his love towards myself."

"Well, that is something."

"It is a great deal, if you did but know my heart, and how I dread the thought of an unholy, unblessed marriage."

"And yet such a marriage is the very rock upon which you cast yourself."

"Oh! no, no, I am not married yet. I never will be on any other condition than that of a mutual struggle to fulfil the duties of an honourable—a Christian life. We may fail in our duties, we may fall very short of the

requirements of such a life, but there must be at least an endeavour—a desire; or of all earthly conditions, such a marriage would be the most wretched.”

“And you are sincere in this determination, and firm too, are you, Kate? for it requires firmness as much as sincerity.”

“I think you cannot doubt my firmness, whatever else you may doubt in relation to me. Surely I have given you sufficient proof of that?”

“Why yes,” said Michael Staunton, “but as he spoke there came a strange expression over his face, and Kate looked up, alarmed. It passed, however, for the moment, and she said, more earnestly than before, “Now, grandfather, lay your kind hand upon my head, and tell me I am forgiven.”

The old man did as she entreated him; softly, but impressively, with his clasped hands held over her, he breathed a prayer for her, and for himself. The tone of his voice, the language of his prayer, were both so solemn that it seemed to Kate at that moment almost as if spiritual beings were surrounding her; and for a long time she remained with bowed head beneath the pressure of those hands, afraid to interrupt the perfect stillness which reigned around.

At last the quiet step of Margaret was heard within the door, and gently releasing herself from that long pressure, Kate looked up into her grandfather's face.

In an instant the whole scene was changed. No sound of strong emotion, nor hurried movement, nor excessive sorrow, still less of fear, was heard within that shrouded room; but gentle hands were busy there, and sure feet trod the carpet hastily, with steps as still as falling snow.

How vain, but yet how natural! Shrieks might have echoed—thunder might have rolled, and not a muscle of that once active frame would now have stirred, nor dim eye opened to the light. Where now were all those quick perceptions, once so difficult to baffle or deceive? Eternal stillness had calmed down that once too vivid consciousness of present things; and Hatherstone, with its broad lands, and woods, and wealth of waving corn, had passed away from the long line of its hereditary lords.

Intelligence, whether true or false, respecting the disposal of any large amount of property, is sure to travel fast and far; and no sooner was it known at Hatherstone that the solicitor previously engaged in the making of Mr. Staunton's will had been sent for in haste, and that he and the master of the mansion were in close consultation in one room, while Miss Staunton sat weeping in another, than servants, and work-people, and all who felt any interest in the affairs of the Hall, made themselves busy with conjectures as to the final bestowment of the property on the demise of its present owner.

The death of a master so generally respected as Mr. Staunton had been, was but an event in the common course of nature; but the disposal of the Hatherstone estate soon became a theme of earnest consultation, and profound interest. While all were of the opinion that the granddaughter was disinherited, some conjectured that the widow would be left entire proprietress; and others, with as little reason, imagined that Frederick Ashley would prove to be the fortunate inheritor; which last belief was founded simply on the common principle of wealth attracting wealth.

And all the while that these various calculations were going on, that reports were spreading far and wide, and

that property to fifty times the value of the Hatherstone estate was being disposed of according to the fancy or the wish of every individual speaker upon this prolific theme, no sign or sound of such a thought being present to their minds, was betrayed either by Margaret or Kate; but silently and solemnly they went about the house, preparing for their last duties towards the dead, as real mourners as ever wept the loss of kindness, or the memory of departed worth. Few words were exchanged between them during these sad preparations. Theirs was a sorrow felt too deeply, and understood too well, to need the aid of words; and if Kate shed more tears than her friend, it was only that her eyes were younger, not that her heart was more desolate or more distressed.

We have said that rumour flew far and wide, and bore wherever it went the story of Kate Staunton having incurred the displeasure of her grandfather by some act of disobedience which none were wise enough to be able to explain, though many made the attempt; and startling as was the intelligence of the great event itself, it was perhaps the cause of quite as much astonishment, and far more calculation, with some who heard it, to learn that such had been the aggravated offence of poor Kate, as even to hasten the closing scene which was spoken of as having sealed her doom, and shut her out from every prospect of future wealth and comfort.

It was not to be supposed that the Ashleys would hear all these particulars without reviving hopes, or that such hopes would be unattended by demonstrations of sorrow exactly proportioned to their amount. The Lees felt differently. It was repugnant to their nature to connect a pleasant thought with the death of any one, and Mrs. Lee herself was too much occupied with present duties to

do more than weep in secret for a loss which left her scarcely more desolate than she had been before. Arnold was the only representative of this fallen family who could possibly be present on the day of the funeral, and he repaired to Hatherstone accordingly.

Arnold and Frederick Ashley met on this occasion for the first time since the scenes in Lady Crawford's library, and all unconsciously on Arnold's part, he shook the hand of one who had so lately trifled with his sister's heart, and now—but let that pass. It is no time for idle thoughts, and what has human love to do with scenes like these?

There was a chastened, but an honourable pride about the widow of Michael Staunton, which rendered her keenly alive to all the outward circumstances of respect which could, on this occasion, be paid to his remains; and never did a funeral train pass out from the old Hall of Hatherstone with more imposing pomp of solemn grandeur, than was seen that day winding its way along the lanes crowded with groups of lookers-on, towards the parish church where slept the Stauntons of many generations, none more honoured than him whose dust was now about to mingle with the undistinguishable ashes of those who had gone before.

It was a calm but glorious day, and not a leaf seemed stirred, as the long train passed on. Many were weeping; for there are eyes that always weep at funerals, and the country people felt a heavy loss. Many were weeping, but Margaret kept her tears until there should be none to witness them, and stood in her pale grief, apparently unmoved, except by thoughts of prayer and holy resignation to the righteous will of God.

It was a trial of her fortitude to mingle afterwards with

those whose thoughts were widely different from her own; and worse than all, there was the reading of the will to be endured, that one event at which so many hearts have beat so high—at which so many hearts have also sunk so low. Margaret's did neither. She knew all that was to come, and therefore sat the only one unmoved in all that company.

It was a strange will—incomprehensible—unprecedented. No one had ever heard of such a will before. The property seemed nobody's—no one the better for it. One fact alone was certain and intelligible, that one thousand pounds, and nothing more, was left to each of the three branches of the Staunton family, to the Ashleys, and the Lees, and to Kate, as the sole survivor of her father's house. To her, and to Arnold, this bequest seemed very bountiful; to the Ashleys, a pittance scarcely worth accepting. But they did accept it, nevertheless, and well it served their purpose in a scheme which already occupied their hearts and hands.

Thus it was that the great transactions of the day passed over, and the place seemed all at once deserted. Nothing was changed beyond what was absolutely necessary in the outward aspect of Hatherstone, nor yet within the walls, and yet nothing looked the same. An all-pervading spirit, an undisputed power, a moving principle, was gone; and those who now remained seemed left without authority, or law, or motive.

For the present, it was generally understood, that Margaret Staunton was sole mistress of the place; and yet so narrow was her rule and scope, so limited her means, that preparations soon began to appear for closing many apartments in the building, and for appropriating for her own use such only as were retired and simple, and

suited to her humble and self-denying habits. Even so far she moved in nothing by herself; and so frequent were her consultations with the solicitor who had always been employed in the affairs of Michael Staunton, that reports were spread abroad tending to prove how he was in reality the inheritor of the Hatherstone property, and Margaret only a pensioner upon the estate.

CHAPTER XIV.



THOUSAND POUNDS!" said Arnold Lee to himself before he retired to rest on the evening after the funeral, "and all our own!—A thousand pounds!" It seemed a mine of wealth; and, of course, he began to form a plan of emigration, as rich in its promise of prosperity, as this unexpected wealth seemed boundless in its present resources.

Few men in their senses, circumstanced as Arnold was at that time, would have dreamed of dividing this sum into minute fragments, so as to direct each item into the channel of his father's debts; and yet Arnold did think, again and again, of doing something for the most necessities of his creditors; and had there been any parties really suffering, he and his mother were both prepared to make the utmost sacrifice. All who had been losers by the bankruptcy of Mr. Lee, however, were parties transacting business on so wide and liberal a scale, that to deprive his mother of this her rightful means of subsistence for such a purpose, would have appeared but like a burlesque upon integrity, and a mockery of justice.

Mr. Lee had never been a man in whom the widow sought a friend, or in whose hands she wished to entrust her mite. The hoarded earnings of humble industry

never had been committed to his keeping. He stood aloof, and widely separated from persons of this class; and consequently, though there had been grievous wrong, there had been but little suffering inflicted by his ambitious and unprincipled transactions.

In one case, and one alone, Arnold and his mother were both agreed that some restitution ought to be made. It was in that of Arthur Hamilton; for they knew too well how the credulity of his father had been worked upon by those flattering promises which terminated so fatally to his hopes, and to his life. It was therefore so managed, that the sum of three hundred pounds should be placed in his hands as if it had been his by right, and only discovered on the final settlement of Mr. Lee's affairs. Delicacy forbade that it should be offered him as a gift; nor was there any violation of the truth in speaking of it as a right. The young gentleman was not curious to know how or whence it came. Fully aware how much his parent had been wronged by Mr. Lee, he was easily persuaded that to accept the money was really more generous to his friend, than to refuse it; and with his accustomed thoughtlessness, he no sooner became acquainted with the fact, than he hurried into some fresh expenses, calculated only to afford him a very transient gratification.

"A thousand pounds; and all our own!" said Arnold Lee to himself, many times after the three hundred had been disposed of as already specified, for still it sounded in his ear, and felt in his heart, like a thousand; and still it afforded him incalculable resources wherewith to scheme, and build his castles for the future.

"We are not penniless now," said he one day, rising proudly from the grassy mound where he had been seated to watch the tide flow in. "I am not the abject beggar

now, which *she* thought me when she spurned me from her feet."

It may readily be supposed, that this expression was but a paragraph in the long history of his wrongs and sufferings, which, ever since his last interview with Dorothy Dalrymple, had rankled in his heart. It so happened, they had never met since that memorable day when he had ventured to make her acquainted with the state of his affections, and when he had received what he considered as a cruel and scornful repulse. Indeed, he greatly preferred, under such circumstances, the occupations in which he was now engaged, and even the ruder company of those hard-working and coarse men, who were associated with him along the line of shore which skirted the Waverton estate. Sometimes he felt as if he had bid a welcome and a willing adieu to the polished circles of society for ever; and if emigration was to be his future lot, no preparation for it could have been more suitable than the mode of life he was now pursuing.

But amidst all this hard labour, strong exercise, and coarse companionship, Arnold was not always happy. He could not always shut out, and keep away, the recurrence of that bright vision which had made the darkness of his lot more dark—its stern realities more real. And was it absolutely certain, he asked himself, that the vision *was* dispelled for ever? Had he no power to call it back? Had he not, in fact, been more than half to blame himself—the destroyer of his own fair picture? Had he not allowed his wounded pride, and irritated temper, to gain the mastery over his better feelings; and, instead of exercising that manly determination, and unflinching perseverance, which, on all other occasions of his life, he found so serviceable to his purposes, had he not on this, to him the

most important, acted rather with the caprice and petulance of a vain and heartless woman, than with the self-command and right feeling of a man of sense?

This was a mode of communing with his own heart, which it was scarcely probable that Arnold Lee should long pursue, without arriving at the determination of making another fair and honourable trial; and, for this purpose, many letters were commenced about the midnight hour, all doomed to the same speedy destruction so soon as the light of the morning sun had illuminated their unfinished pages.

No man likes to subject his thoughts in a written form to the scorn of a contemptuous woman, and Arnold determined at last to make the experiment of a few more personal observations upon the character of Dorothy Dalrymple, before he placed himself in a position to be again repelled by her indifference, or wounded by her ridicule.

But before Arnold's scheme could be put in practice, it is necessary to take a few backward steps in our story, in order to understand what were the leading subjects of interest with Miss Dalrymple about this time. First, then, there was the liberation of James Burton from his long and humiliating imprisonment, an event in which it was perfectly natural that Dorothy should be one of the first to take an active and benevolent part; though both the activity and the benevolence of what she was subsequently induced to undertake on behalf of that helpless man and his suffering family, owed much of their stimulus to causes somewhat opposed to the kindlier feelings of the human heart.

It was with a very faint hope of rendering them any real service that Dorothy had first espoused this cause;

but, hearing how scornfully Mrs. Norris had spoken of her endeavours to interest some of her friends in favour of the family, and how all who were of the Norris way of thinking in her recent quarrel with that lady, spoke of a total failure as the inevitable result of any attempt which she might contemplate making in that quarter, Dorothy was at last determined that the good people of M—— should see what she could do, unaided; and on this occasion, for the first time in her life, she launched forth on her own responsibility, and took the lead in a somewhat hazardous undertaking.

Only so far at least as her own position and character were at stake, was there any risk to be incurred. The poor family could not be made poorer than they were. They themselves knew little of what was going on in their behalf; and as for any hopes which Betsy might entertain from such a movement, enough has already been said to show that her disappointment at least would not be a very severe one.

The first idea of James Burton's release from prison, entirely exonerated from all suspicion of actual guilt, had been of such overwhelming interest both to himself and his family, that scarcely had there been a single calculation upon what would be the next step in his career. Betsy was the first to take this view of the subject under her consideration; and she it was, who suggested the desirableness of leaving for ever a country "in which men's lives and liberties were so little to be called their own." Not that Betsy was at all addicted to believing generally in the existence of those new-fangled countries of which she occasionally heard; but she had a cousin who had actually returned from Australia alive, and well; and who besides reporting favourably of the country,

climate, and mode of living there, was about to return as a matter of free choice; and thither it was that Betsy conceived the notion of transplanting her brother and his family, if the plan could be rendered practicable.

In the prosecution of this plan there were many difficulties to be encountered; and one amongst the rest upon which Betsy, with all her forethought, would never have calculated. It was a decided objection on the part of her brother, and that entirely from what appeared to her as the strongest of all reasons for going. The very fact which would have driven her away—the publicity of his name as associated with transactions as revolting as they were calamitous, had the effect of so far encouraging and exalting his weaker spirit, that he began to imagine himself a great man upon the strength of his celebrity, and actually believed himself surrounded by friends, because he found he was just now received with a momentary excitement wherever he went. For the first time in his life, James Burton tasted the pleasures of distinction, and it came upon him at a season when he was more than usually prepared to drink deeply of this new enjoyment. It came the more liberally too, because two rival ladies poured it into his cup, and thus his name grew really famous; while half the gossips of the town of M—— declared it impossible for Miss Dalrymple, with all her assumption, to render him the least portion of effectual help; and the other half declared that she was the very person to take up his cause, because she was of all people the most capable of carrying out whatever she might undertake.

“But *how?*” said Dorothy to herself very reasonably, after she had made publicly known her determination to contrive, collect, or create, sufficient means for fitting out

James Burton and his numerous family for Australia. "But how?" she repeated, as she bit her lip, and looked into the embers of a dying fire, long after the midnight hour.

It was indeed a puzzling question, but Dorothy was not to be mastered by difficulties in a case like this, where not only her promise, but her defiance had gone forth; for she had declared before a party of borderers skirting her interests, and telling from her side to the other—she had declared before this party that she *would* accomplish what Mrs. Norris had pronounced impossible; and that, before six months had passed over her head, the Burtons should have their passage-money for Australia, with altogether as comfortable an outfit as any respectable family could desire.

"But how?" Dorothy was not accustomed to begging, and she was still less able to give. Experiment must be made of the possible; and that referred only to the former mode of proceeding; so Dorothy began for the first time in her life to beg.

At first her endeavours in this line were extremely encouraging. All her friends were profoundly interested in her descriptions of what had been suffered by the family, as well as what was now required; and all, or most of them, hoped they should be able to contribute *something*. Dorothy wondered occasionally, when they said this, that the promised something was not put into her hands; but time appeared to be necessary for all, and therefore she departed with the assurance of soon calling again. On making a second round of calls, however, Dorothy discovered to her dismay, that of all who had been so profoundly interested on behalf of the unfortunate Burtons, scarcely one in ten retained the slightest

recollection of the subject under the form of a charitable demand; and out of this number there were fewer still, in whose minds it was possible to revive the fact of their having made any personal engagement to contribute a single mite to the collection which was now proposed to their benevolent attention.

Naturally more fitted for daring enterprise than for patient endurance, Dorothy Dalrymple felt very forcibly that to await the result of a process like this, would be to place herself and her projects entirely within the power of her enemies. Having formed her resolution—having uttered her defiance, this would never do. So, concealing her disappointment, and taking care to describe herself wherever she was asked, as being “exceedingly encouraged, supported by a greater number of friends than she had ever calculated upon, and altogether in a position to defy the Ashleys and the Norrises;” still Dorothy was compelled to change the plan of her attack altogether, and, failing in the money, solicited contributions of useful articles, such as clothing, and household furniture, or anything, in fact, which her friends were disposed to give, or which could be rendered available to a family preparing to emigrate to a very distant quarter of the world.

It was evidently a great relief to many of the inhabitants of the town of M—— when Miss Dalrymple’s charitable efforts assumed this new form. They had no wish to desert her party—they hated Mrs. Norris and the Ashleys as cordially as she did; and although they had no money to spare, having so many benevolent channels to supply, they did believe if diligent search could be made, that something might be found for the afflicted family. At all events, if destitute of any superfluity themselves, they all had some aunt, or some grandmother, to whom

they pledged themselves to allow no rest by night or by day, until something should be found for Miss Dalrymple's collection.

For the purpose of ensuring more directness and concentration, it now became necessary to fix upon a time, and place, for the gathering in of this harvest of benevolent feeling; for the feeling itself is of little value without its substantial fruits. Nothing could appear better calculated for such a purpose than a vacant room in Mr. Dalrymple's own house, and here it was that Dorothy requested her compassionate friends to deposit such valuables as they felt disposed to commit to her care; and here it was that Betsy Burton was stationed, as a fitting recipient of the favours about to be so plentifully showered down upon her ill fated brother.

Had any one watched the countenance of Betsy on the morning of the appointed day, they might easily have detected a lurking expression about her eye and mouth, which indicated no great amount of faith in the result of this scheme, nor even in the agency employed for carrying it out.

The first-fruits of compassion which the liberality of Miss Dalrymple's friends presented as their offering on behalf of the unfortunate, when unfolded from its wrappings by the curious Betsy, was discovered to be a faded ball-dress, denuded of its trimmings; the second was a defective copy of a very excellent book; the third was a wax doll, adorned with lace and spangles; the fourth was a pair of boots, wanting one sole; the fifth was a painted hand-screen, edged round with gilt paper; the sixth was a couple of book-marks, with sentimental inscriptions; the seventh was a Noah's ark, minus the animals; the eighth was a metal teapot, with a hole in the bottom; the

ninth was a picture of a new hotel, set in a large black frame; the tenth was a moth-eaten great coat; the eleventh—but here the arrivals became too numerous to be recorded; and while Betsy unfolded them hastily, and threw each in its turn into a general heap upon the floor, Dorothy stood looking on, sometimes convulsed with laughter, and sometimes burning with indignation at the mock generosity of her friends; for it was now but too evident that they had selected, not what the Burtons really *did want*, but what they themselves *did not*.

Not that Dorothy yielded to any expression of her disappointment. She could not have borne that even Betsy Burton should witness her chagrin; and although secretly disposed quite as much to weep as to laugh, she appeared to make light of the whole matter, and not even yet to despair of carrying out her avowed determination. Perhaps after all, her great spirit might have failed on this particular occasion, but that towards the close of the day, there arrived a rather remarkable looking packet, addressed to herself, with the compliments of Mrs. Norris, beneath which was written, "For the use of the afflicted family, or for any of their friends who may be in want of the enclosed."

Dorothy was of course rather curious as to what the enclosed might be; but with an air of the utmost indifference, she turned over this packet also into the hands of Betsy, who quickly unravelled the mystery, and brought the hidden treasure to light. It proved to be a miniature fool's cap and bells, ingeniously constructed, and evidently intended to throw an air of contempt over the whole transaction.

"Not defeated yet!" muttered Dorothy between her

clenched teeth, and inaudibly to any one but Betsy, who stood close by her side.

"Then your spirit beats mine," said the latter, "for if this entire business isn't a failure, I don't know what a failure is."

"Nothing can be a failure, until one's own spirit is broken," said Dorothy, impatiently turning over some articles in the heap with her foot.

"I declare," said Betsy, dropping both her hands by her side, "there's not one article in all the room that I would pack in my box, if I might have it for nothing. Why these people have neither shame, nor pity, as it seems to me. If they were my friends, which I am thankful to say they are not—but if they were my friends, I would give them my mind on the subject."

"Would you?" said Dorothy, looking sharply in her face. "Mine would be a very different plan from yours, for nothing on earth should induce me to mention it; and I charge it upon you, as you regard my honour, to observe the same secrecy. I don't mind you, and nobody else is acquainted with what we have learned this blessed day. We will keep our own counsel. But these things must be burned."

"Burned?" exclaimed Betsy. "We shall set the house on fire."

"Never mind that," said Dorothy. "My father is from home, and the people in the neighbourhood will only think they are burning waste paper in the office. Come, you are a clever woman. Help me to get this mountain of rubbish consumed before the morning."

Notwithstanding Betsy Burton was, as her young mistress had said, a clever woman, it puzzled her exceedingly how to manage the burning of so large an amount of

inflammable matter, without danger to the building and premises ; and as old Bridget was not to be in the secret, it became necessary to wait until her vigilant eyes had closed for the night.

Until that time, Betsy was busy turning over and examining the various articles, in the hope that some few at least would be found available ; but with the exception of the moth-eaten great-coat, it was but too evident that the benevolence of Dorothy's friends had not even in the outset had the slightest reference to the necessities it was professedly meant to relieve.

"The wax doll shall go too," said Betsy, consigning the whole to one irrevocable doom, and at the same time trampling them down in order to repress any extraordinary tendency to inflammable excess.

"How extravagantly wasteful!" exclaimed Dorothy, laughing ; "the doll at least was without a fault."

"It had lost one eye," remonstrated Betsy ; "and in a doll, I take that to be a very great fault. Besides which, what signifies one doll amongst ten children, but to make quarrelling and discord, where there's already discord enough. No, no, the sooner this ugly business is finished and forgotten, the better ; so here goes—for by this time old Bridget is snoring.

As she said this, Betsy gathered up both arms full of the fruits of benevolence, and carrying them into the back premises of the house, commenced her work of destruction. The habits of the Dalrymple family, however, having restricted all acts of burning and consumption on the premises to a very narrow compass, no wide fire-place could be found at all commensurate to the exigencies of this crisis. The business in hand consequently occupied both agents until a very late hour of the night, or rather

long after the churches in the town of M—— had rung their midnight chimes. And there these two sat all the while, as Dorothy said, "like witches over their incantations," sometimes disturbed by the questions of the wandering policeman, who could scarcely be convinced by what they told him that all was right within the house, and sometimes alarmed by the brilliance of their own illumination ; yet altogether wonderfully busy, and not particularly ill amused.

"It feels so much like burning up one's own folly," said Dorothy, as she wrapped the wax doll in the ball dress, determined to enjoy a blaze that should be supreme above all others. But it was suddenly snatched from her hand by Betsy, who insisted that such a combination would be destruction to the house, and most likely to the whole neighbourhood.

"Better burn the doll in a boot," said she, "and let things go off quietly when we can."

"You are right, Betsy," said her companion ; "the next good thing to burning one's folly is to conceal it ; and that will certainly not be accomplished by setting the house on fire."

"Concerning this same folly," said Betsy, still very busy with the boot, "I never could exactly see the necessity for being foolish at all."

"But some people are born foolish," said Dorothy.

"And some people make themselves foolish who never were born so," replied her companion with considerable sharpness in her look and manner. "Commend me to a little common sense."

"Commend me to a little common feeling," responded Dorothy. "I have learned a good deal, Betsy, by this folly of mine. I have learned how little people really

care for you, even at the best—that is, when you are asking nothing of them but a little ordinary kindness.”

“We’ve learned one thing,” observed Betsy, “with a witness.”

“What is that?” asked Dorothy.

“How little they care for my brother James. I suppose you will give up this scheme altogether now?”

“By no means. I tell you plainly, Betsy, I am not going to let all the good actions in the world be monopolised by you, and—and one other person. I see no reason why I should not do a kind service to your brother if I choose.”

“And if you *can*, Miss Dalrymple.”

“Who has any right to question whether I can or not?”

“Why, there is a good many people questioning it just now, I rather fancy; but who they are, is not for me to say. Suppose you were just decently to give the matter up. It strikes me that would be least trouble in the end.”

“Never!”

“Ah! my dear young lady, that’s a serious word for one like you!”

“And I mean it seriously. It is time to be serious, with such a bonfire as this before us. Betsy, will you live with me when I am married?”

“You are surely not going to wind up with that folly?”

“What else can I do?”

“Do anything but that. Live contentedly as you are; and set the world and its ways at defiance.”

“It does not answer to defy the world when one is poor. I want to be rich, on purpose that I may defy it. Why look you, if at this moment I had but a few thousands at my command, how comfortably I could send away your

brother and his family, and triumph over my enemies as I did so."

Betsy shook her head.

"What makes you look so unbelieving?" asked Dorothy.

"Because you are mixing up two things as different in themselves as fire and snow. I suppose you have some notion, Miss Dalrymple, though I can't say that I see many signs of it—yet I suppose you have some notion that there is a great and good God above us, seeing and taking note of all that we say and do? Now, suppose for a moment that He put it into your power to do this great kindness to my poor brother, and when all was finished, as you say comfortably, you turned round and said, 'I have done all this to spite my enemies, and to triumph over them.'"

"Ah! but you misunderstand me, Betsy, very much indeed. I am only half bad, after all. I am sure I feel a great deal of kindness and pity for your brother."

Betsy laid her hand upon the arm of her young mistress, and looking earnestly into her face, said in a voice of great seriousness, "It is just this half good, and half bad, as you call it, that is making ruin of your happiness, of your character, of everything that you do. I am but a servant, Miss Dalrymple, and strange as one may say to you and yours, it does not become me therefore to be talking to you as I might have talked to those who knew me better, and who loved me, though I was their servant; but I cannot stand by in silence and see you wasting all your good gifts at this rate."

"And what would you have me to do, Betsy?"

"I would have you to *be* something, first."

"But what?"

“An honest woman—true to yourself, and to the better purposes of your heart; doing something worthy of being loved and admired for, rather than trying for ever to make people love and admire you for nothing.”

“Perhaps some day I shall take your advice, and be wiser, Betsy. In the mean time, I have a stormy sea to cross—a great gulf to leap—and nobody to help me over. But see, the morning light is already glimmering through the shutters, and as our valuables are nearly all consumed, I will leave you to finish the work of destruction alone.”

CHAPTER XV.



OR more than a month had elapsed after this harvest of rich presents on behalf of the poor Burtons had been gathered in, when Betsy, to her unutterable astonishment, received one day a sum of money enclosed in a cover for herself, and accompanied only by these words—"For the use of the Burtons in their passage and outfit for Australia."

It was both natural and right that Betsy should apply immediately to her mistress for an explanation of this to her unaccountable mystery, the sum of money being of far greater amount than she felt justified in appropriating for the use of her brother, unless some satisfactory clue could be found to the source of such an unlooked-for and liberal supply. Dorothy, however, while declining to throw any light on the subject, assured Betsy that all was perfectly right; and that to attempt to return the money to the hand of the giver, would be as impracticable as absurd. By these and other observations of a similar nature, she betrayed beyond all question that the extraordinary circumstance was no mystery to her; but as her manner was unusually grave and reserved whenever she repelled the enquiries of Betsy on this subject, it ceased to be discussed between them, and the money, with much

contrivance and care-taking, was at last applied to its legitimate use.

In the mean time, Arnold Lee, no longer utterly destitute of resources, nor by any means the abject and down-stricken wretch he had felt himself when first entering Mr. Dalrymple's office, was nursing within his heart the flattering hope, that perhaps he had been mistaken in the degree of contempt implied by those simple and playful words which, at the moment when uttered, had sounded the death peal of his fond expectations. Arnold was not vain, but he was sanguine; and he could not think so meanly of Miss Dalrymple as to believe she would be influenced in her choice of a companion for life, by no higher considerations than those of mere worldly distinction. It was under the impression of feelings of this nature, therefore, that he requested an interview with Dorothy, for the purpose of ascertaining the actual state of her mind towards himself, not the mere momentary whim which it might please her fancy to indulge, but her deliberate determination with regard to the hopes she had alternately encouraged and repelled.

On the occasion of this interview, Dorothy was unusually grave, and though but a few months had passed since the drawing lessons were concluded in so abrupt a manner, Arnold could discover certain traces of care and anxiety upon her forehead, the more sad to contemplate, because they were written on a countenance usually so bright and gay, and often so reckless in its expression. Beyond this, too, there was evident to Arnold's observant gaze—

“An unquiet drooping of the eye,
As if its lid were charged with unshed tears.”

And if anything had been wanting before to deepen the interest which he felt in this unprotected girl, the thought

of what she must inevitably meet with in the world, of what she was perhaps even now beginning to realise, as her portion of the sad experience of a vain and self-willed woman, gave him at once a boldness in speaking, and a tenderness in expressing what he felt.

On discovering what was the object of this interview, Dorothy had at first appeared unusually embarrassed, and evidently desired nothing so much as to bring it to a sudden termination in any possible manner. For this purpose she tried her familiar mode of treating the whole matter as a jest, to be laughed away like the mere compliment of a moment. But some how or other, her own raillery failed her now. It wanted its accustomed point; and the laughter which she attempted, died away upon her lips, until its last utterance was breathed only in a sigh. At length she became serious—deeply, mournfully serious. It was an occasion for being so, for it was a moment of vital importance to the happiness or the misery of her own future lot—to the good or the evil of her own future course.

We will not attempt to repeat what Arnold found to say on this occasion. It was one of those moments of life in which the dumb have sometimes been found eloquent—the eloquent worse than dumb. Perhaps of all situations in human experience, a man is least able to say how he will acquit himself in this; and if Arnold said more than he had previously dared to dream of, it was purely owing to the unaccustomed silence of his companion, and the subdued and patient look with which she listened to him.

Patience, however, was not all. There was deep sorrow written on her countenance as he went on, though still her eyes were fixed upon the table on which she leaned.

Arnold watched the face of his companion until it

seemed to him that her lips grew pale and tremulous, and still the long shadow of her dark eyelashes lay unmoved upon her cheek, and still she spoke not. At last the large tears came, and heavily and slowly one after another rolled down her cheeks, like a torrent long pent up which has not yet found free or ample outlet.

Arnold was wholly taken by surprise. Why did she weep? He had spoken kindly, even as he would have addressed his dying sister. He tried to speak more kindly still, but she only wept the more. He grew alarmed—not knowing what to think or apprehend. He had heard of woman's wayward and capricious moods, but practically he knew nothing of them, for such had never been his mother's or his sister's temper towards himself. Naturally too, he was incapable of willingly causing a thrill of pain to any woman, still less to one so interesting and so beloved. Unlike too many of his sex, he sought no triumph here. It served no purpose of his generous heart to prove how far he had the power to pain as well as please. A stranger to all artifice, and far above disguise, he could do nothing but go on with the deep eloquence of manly truth, only that his manner grew more sympathising, and his voice more kind.

At last there was an attempt on Dorothy's part to speak, and raising her head in an imploring manner, she said, "You must hear me—I cannot bear this."

Arnold was silent.

"It needs but a few words," said Dorothy, speaking with great difficulty, "and yet I cannot utter them. Is there not something which the condemned wretch has to say upon the scaffold, or some sign which he has to give before the executioner performs his part? Those few words are what I have now to utter."

"What are they?" said Arnold, for the suspense was more than he could bear.

"It is too late!" said Dorothy. "Those are the words of doom to me, no less than to you."

"You do not mean it!" said Arnold.

"I do," she replied. "I am sold—sacrificed!"

"Any woman who is an unwilling victim can revoke her doom."

"But I did not tell you that I was unwilling."

"Most assuredly you did not; and I beg your pardon, Miss Dalrymple, for so absurd a suggestion."

"Dorothy held out her hand. "Arnold," she said, "My friend—my brother. I must call you Arnold this once. I shall not often offend in this way again. Don't leave me as you did once before, hastily and in anger. Let us part friends, at least. Would you like to know who it is to whom I have sold myself?"

"Perhaps I should."

"Your cousin, Frederick Ashley."

"Impossible!"

"It is nevertheless true."

"And may I ask what are the terms of this horrible compact?"

"Why do you call it horrible?"

"Because he has no heart to love you; no soul even to reflect the images which make the beauty of yours."

"But he has riches, and a splendid villa, and he is not hateful to me, only indifferent. When so many people in the world are marrying and scheming about marriages on such conditions, why should not I?"

"Because you are not like the rest of the world. You have feelings and affections scarcely yet discovered by yourself, and you have a capability of suffering and self-

contempt, which under such circumstances will make the poison of your life."

"How is it, then, if I have these feelings and affections, that no one in the world ever gave me credit for them but yourself?"

"I cannot tell; unless, as I have ventured to hope, there was an instinctive sympathy between your character and mine which led me to understand and love you from the first."

"Well, that is all over now. Nobody will ever try to understand me again; or if they do, they won't succeed like you."

"But is it indeed all over? for it seems to me that even yet you are trifling, and I cannot conceive it possible for you to speak so lightly of such a fate as being Frederick Ashley's wife, if as you say it is inevitable."

"It is indeed too true."

"Then I must leave you."

"Wait but one moment."

"I dare not—I ought not."

"It is but as a friend I ask you."

"But it is not as a friend that I am feeling, and therefore it is that I ought not to stay."

"Look here. You remember this little drawing of yours?"

"Certainly."

"May I retain it in my possession?"

"If you wish it, or anything else that I have in the world."

"And will you accept this little cameo from me. It is very plainly set, but it was once my mother's, and it is the only real treasure I possess. Nay, not a word. You will break my heart if you refuse me this little kindness."

Arnold could not speak. An unwonted weakness took possession of him; and as he held out his hand to receive the little gift, he was compelled to turn away his head to hide his tears.

"Now, Arnold, before we part," said Dorothy, "you shall make me a promise."

"I dare not."

"You may do it very safely. It has nothing to do with this foolishness of yours—of mine."

"What is it then?"

"My father is in some respects a hard man, and you are in difficult circumstances. If there should ever come a serious misunderstanding betwixt you and him, in which a friend could serve you, will you let me know?"

"I will."

"And will you speak kindly of me to that angel mother of yours? Ah! if I had been her daughter, I never should have made this miserable choice."

"Once for all, why *do* you make it? It seems to me that you are mad to risk your happiness on such a venture."

"Not quite so mad as that, for happiness has nothing whatever to do with the question. Happiness is a word which I shall now make it the whole business of my life to forget. I never did implicitly believe in it—now, less than ever."

"Again we are lost in the same labyrinth of reasons without reason, and consequences deplored yet willingly incurred. Tell me for once, is it hatred of my poverty, or love of Frederick Ashley's wealth, which leads you to act as you do?"

"Perhaps both. I was not formed for obscurity: I dare not think of it—it seems to me like living in a tomb."

"And the affection of your husband, and the love of

your home could be nothing to you under such circumstances?"

"I fear not enough."

"Then it is indeed time that we should separate, and I can now say farewell more easily, because I find that with all my fancied penetration, I have been mistaken in supposing you to possess a woman's heart."

"Time will solve that question like many others," said Dorothy, with a voice of unusual sadness, "and like many others it will probably be solved too late."

There were no parting words upon the lips of either as they pressed each other by the hand for the last time. Each had enough to do to quell the tumult and confusion of thought and feeling which this interview had awakened—each had enough to do to hush down words of tenderness and affection which had better not be spoken; and not until Arnold found himself pacing with rapid strides a solitary pathway which led away from the busy town towards the scene of his accustomed labours, was he fully sensible of his actual situation, or even of the one leading fact which was yet to be stamped upon his heart as with a brand of iron, that he had in all probability parted with Dorothy Dalrymple for ever.

Unconscious of circumstances so much more intimately connected with his inner feelings, it was not very likely that Arnold Lee should attach the slightest importance to the state of the winds, or clouds, or trouble his mind for an instant with any provision against the gathering of a storm, which any less absorbed or pre-occupied traveller would at that season of the year have regarded as a phenomenon of no trifling interest.

"Let the storm come!" cried he, with a kind of petulant defiance, after a passenger along the same path

had addressed him with some words alluding to the black and threatening appearance of the heavens: "let the storm come! I never was in a better humour for a storm in my whole life. Hark! Is that thunder?" said he, as a heavy booming sound caught his ear in the distance. "I may as well double my speed at all events, for the fisherman's cottage will certainly be preferable to this bleak waste."

As Arnold said this, he felt upon his brow the first heavy drops from the gathering clouds overhead, and in the distance again was that deep rolling sound scarcely distinguishable now from the pealing thunder which rattled along its black and terrible pathway in the heavens. Never perhaps was any traveller less disturbed by being suddenly surrounded by the awful phenomena of such a scene, than was Arnold at this moment, for he only quickened his pace, and looked watchfully for the forked lightning which seemed to rend the skies before him, without feeling anything but a momentary enjoyment in having his attention driven as it were by force into a channel where there was less torture to his feelings than he had recently been experiencing.

Little did Arnold care at the moment that the pelting rain-drops came more thick and fast—or that a terrible blast sprang up, rushing amongst the few stunted trees which grew along the line of coast, tearing off the leaves and branches, and scattering the fragments all around until the very air seemed laden with destruction. Little did he care, until his footsteps, almost baffled by the blast, began to near the shore, and then he naturally thought of seamen tossed upon the waves, and feared the sudden coming on of the black storm might have surprised some vessel near the coast.

Again that hollow, booming sound. It was nearer now, and Arnold imagined it the signal of some vessel in distress. Lustily as he had battled with the wind and rain before, he now redoubled all his efforts, and quickly gained a ridge of elevated land, from whence he could behold the water, black, and heavy, rolling up against the shore in hollow swells, that seemed with sullen roar to mock the thunder's louder peal.

No single object could Arnold yet distinguish from the general tumult and confusion. Sometimes for a moment he thought he heard the shout of people at a distance on the shore; sometimes his strained eyes were riveted, as he imagined, for a moment, on the black hull of some great vessel looming near a sand-bank, which he knew to be not very distant from the spot; but before he could make sure of anything by sight or sound, again the pealing thunder rolled above him, and again the sheeted rain fell like a curtain all around; and he stood bewildered, scarcely recognising the most familiar objects when they did appear, or knowing towards what point of the compass he was gazing.

At last there were trampling feet distinguishable at no great distance, and as they hurried on, a party of sailors became distinctly visible. Arnold knew the men, and as they passed, in almost breathless haste, he heard them talking of a boat, and who should go; as if they planned some sudden and adventurous enterprise.

It was a natural impulse with Arnold to hurry on amongst these men, scarcely knowing that he did so; and yet no less intent than they in mixing in the enterprise, and if possible assisting in whatever was to be done. To his astonishment, he soon discovered an old acquaintance and fellow worker amongst these men. It was Mad-

Morton; not the sullen, dogged, and reluctant fellow who never joined in anything apparently with heartiness or good will; but now the actual leader of a gang of brave and hardy sailors; now all life and animation, moving and directing like the spirit of the scene, and actually breathing in the angry elements, as if the storm had been his cradle and the sea his home.

"Why, Morton!" said Arnold, "what are you doing here?"

"Saving yon perishing wretches, if the power be in me, and in these men," said Morton, as he seized an oar, and with a practised hand prepared for launching out amongst the boiling waves.

Arnold was about to join the party, but Morton, as he placed his foot upon the boat, said to him in his accustomed surly manner, "we want no landsmen here," and in another moment the boat was gone. Sometimes Arnold thought as he gazed after it that it must have sunk; but again it rose upon some crested billow, and then, apparently tossed back again, seemed nearer than before. Again it was lost sight of, and then again had sped far off into the distance, and Arnold strained his eyes, and could distinguish nothing for the pelting rain.

Indeed, the few words he had exchanged with the party of sailors had not been sufficient to afford him any distinct idea of what was their object in this desperate struggle. A vessel he believed to be in imminent peril, but what was the nature of the vessel, or her destination and probable fate he had no means of knowing. Gradually, however, he found himself surrounded by other spectators of the scene, equally interested with himself; and from some of these he learned a few particulars relating to a steamer, which in due course should have arrived that evening at the port, and which was supposed to be the

vessel now upon the sand-bank, where it was confidently stated to be impossible but that she must either be got off, or go to pieces in an hour.

But while some of the most knowing amongst the crowd who were collected on the shore, were detailing scraps of information gathered from others no wiser than themselves, the rain abated, and the clouds began to clear away, leaving the black and heaving waves more terrible in their distinctness, and that ill-fated vessel a spectacle of horror to all who stood gazing there. Indeed, such was the general sensation when the parting clouds and misty rain permitted the real situation to be seen, that a groan of horror might be heard in deep and muttered sounds along the line of terrified spectators, sometimes almost swelling into a shriek, and then again sinking into deeper and less articulate murmurs.

Arnold was not slow to imbibe a share of the general feeling, little as he had to spare for anything beyond his own secret griefs; and with agile steps he ran along the shore, whenever there was a point to be gained for watching for the boat, or for snatching at some raft, or plank, or other floating object, now to be seen with more and more distinctness on the surface of the waves.

At last there were human forms distinguishable, and then it was that interest grew unbearably intense, and watchers ran along beside the water's edge, in danger of being swept away, hopeless and aimless in their vague endeavours, yet as earnestly intent, as if by every outstretched arm, or wailing cry, they saved a human being from destruction.

"The boat! the boat!" cried many voices in one breath; and Arnold now could see how frightfully the little barque was laden.

It seemed impossible to those who gazed, that such a mass of human beings should reach the shore in safety; and while the crowd stood, earnestly intent upon the fate of the adventurous party, now shouting their assurance that all would yet be well, and then uttering exclamations of warning and caution, all which were lost upon the winds; for neither sight nor sound was capable of penetrating with any steadiness through that dense uproar and confusion of mingled wind and wave—while this was going on, and occupying every other mind, Arnold, more calm than others, because he saw more clearly that nothing available could now be done, found time to think, as he had often thought, about the strange contradictory character of his companion, Mad Morton.

Often associated as he was with the man, his communications with him had still been always abrupt and limited; for nothing that he could say or do had ever been able to draw him into confidence. In fact, he seemed to bear about with him a dark suspicion of the whole human race, attributing to all, except the poor and friendless, the most selfish and malignant motives for their conduct. The poor, if not exactly meritorious, or, in themselves deserving, he believed to be always oppressed, illtreated, and borne down—the victims, serfs, or slaves, of the more wealthy portions of society; and the miserable, wherever he found them, obtained his ready sympathy and support, because he believed that human beings everywhere were, and must be miserable, at one time or another; that they made each other so, and delighted in the wretchedness and the ruin they were capable of effecting.

In all probability, it was the occasional utterance of opinions and sentiments of this nature which had caused him to be known by the name of Mad Morton; but

beyond these dark and misanthropic views deliberately entertained, there were moments in the life of this man marked by more active and real madness, when, from the indulgence of stimulants, to which he was a little too much addicted, he became a spectacle of terror to all who beheld him, and was in reality scarcely a less dangerous companion than had he been a raving lunatic just bursting from his broken chains.

To prevent the recurrence of these moments of frenzy, Arnold had used all his influence whenever he saw the man approaching the limits of excess, or, rather, whenever he saw him in the mood, or in the position to yield to temptation; and so far from having rendered himself offensive or odious to Morton by such interference, it was evident to all who knew the parties, that Arnold could manage this eccentric character better than any other person who had ever made the attempt.

With regard to his strange opinions, and reckless habits, simply as such, Arnold would scarcely have troubled himself so much to correct the one, and restrain the other, because he did not look upon the man himself as a sane person, and consequently, not as a responsible agent; but to those who were unacquainted with this fact, there was often a strange power about Morton in spite of his harsh manners and coarse exterior. There was the power of bitter biting sarcasm—the power of envy against wealth and influence—the power of discontent, and fault-finding—the power of darkness over light; and as it happened, about this time, that there was great distress prevailing throughout the working classes of the country, and great uneasiness and dissatisfaction struggling to find vent, and not unfrequently bursting forth in angry violence against lawful authority, Mad Morton was the very man, when-

ever his tongue was set at liberty, and his brain on fire with the stimulus alluded to—he was the very man these discontented parties wanted for their speaker and instigator. He was the very man to shout loudest amongst them against the aristocracy of their own neighbourhood; against the introduction of machinery; against the hoarding up of money, of corn, or of property of any kind; against all law, and all right, except the poor man's right to speak, to hear, and to enjoy, to the same extent, and in the same measure, as the rich.

But in connection with the bitterness, the violence, and sometimes even the revenge and malignity of this character, Arnold had often discovered the strange anomaly of a certain kindness and generosity, as if the man's heart and better feelings were taken unawares, and he was actually surprised into that which was foreign to his openly professed character and disposition. On no occasion had this contradiction been more manifest than sometimes when led by accident, or driven by the rising tide in stormy weather to find shelter in the fisherman's cottage, which has already been described. There was little in the appearance or manner of the aged woman who occupied this lonely place to attract or interest a stranger, beyond the comeliness and decency of one whom poverty had not been able to degrade; and yet to this woman, whenever he addressed himself to her, Morton was gentle and respectful as if she had been his mother. All those little kindnesses too, which her loneliness and scanty means rendered but the more acceptable, he was in the habit of offering her so unobtrusively, that it was impossible to refuse his help, and often even so quietly, that what he had done was not perceived until after he was gone. In fact, it happened not unfrequently, while

Arnold warmed his hands at the fire and chatted with the old woman, as was his custom with the poor, drawing out her histories of the "good old times," and learning what families of note and influence had lived in the neighbourhood, and how they had been regarded; it was often during these conversations that Morton made his journey to the well, filling the old woman's pail with fresh water, and leaving it without a word beside her door.

"And now," said Arnold, still watching for the boat, "he is his better self again. What can possess a man who rails against, and says he hates, the whole human race, to risk his life at this rate?"

"There—there she goes!" the voices from the shore called out in one united scream of horror; for true enough it was—there was the boat still heaving, but that ill-fated crew!—a sudden wave had swept them from their hold, and men and women—mothers and children, now were floating for a moment in the angry waters.

Morton, however, still was safe, and soon his hardy men were seen beside him, all engaged in grasping struggling arms, or casting ropes, or guiding heaving planks, so that despairing outstretched hands might feel them, and be sure of safety.

It was so near the land this frightful catastrophe had taken place, that when the deep swell of that terrific wave fell back, many were left in such a position as to be caught and dragged away by those who stood upon the shore, until at last an exulting rumour ran that none were lost.

But no! There is another shout of terror—a spectacle attracting all eyes—a white figure heaving on the water still. "Strain every nerve, Mad Morton, with your men." In another moment it will sink, for the last time.

There was no need to shout to Morton. He was there with outstretched arms. "Steady, my boys," said he, and that was all; for stooping forward he could see that one rough wave—one touch of that rude boat, and all would be in vain.

The gazers on the shore grew breathless with their intense watching; no one shouted now. Arnold stood knee-deep in the water, heedless of the rush, and foam, and boiling surge, his eyes intently fixed on that white figure. Already it was sinking—sinking! But the strong arm of Morton was beneath, his iron hand grasped in the delicate drapery which wrapped around the figure like its winding-sheet.



CHAPTER XVI.



ARNOLD LEE had stood upon the shore during that frightful storm, watching the struggle between life and death, watching the almost more than human efforts which were called forth to save the perishing crew of that ill-fated vessel, until every thought and feeling was lost in the intense interest, and the alternate hope and horror, which such a struggle was calculated to excite. At last it fell to his lot to have a part to act in the scene himself; for, ever ready with swift foot and able hand, he had been the first to rush down to the water's edge, so soon as the boat was within reach, to receive from those hardy seamen either the living or the dead, as their burden might prove to be, and so to set them at liberty again to return and to renew their benevolent and magnanimous exertions.

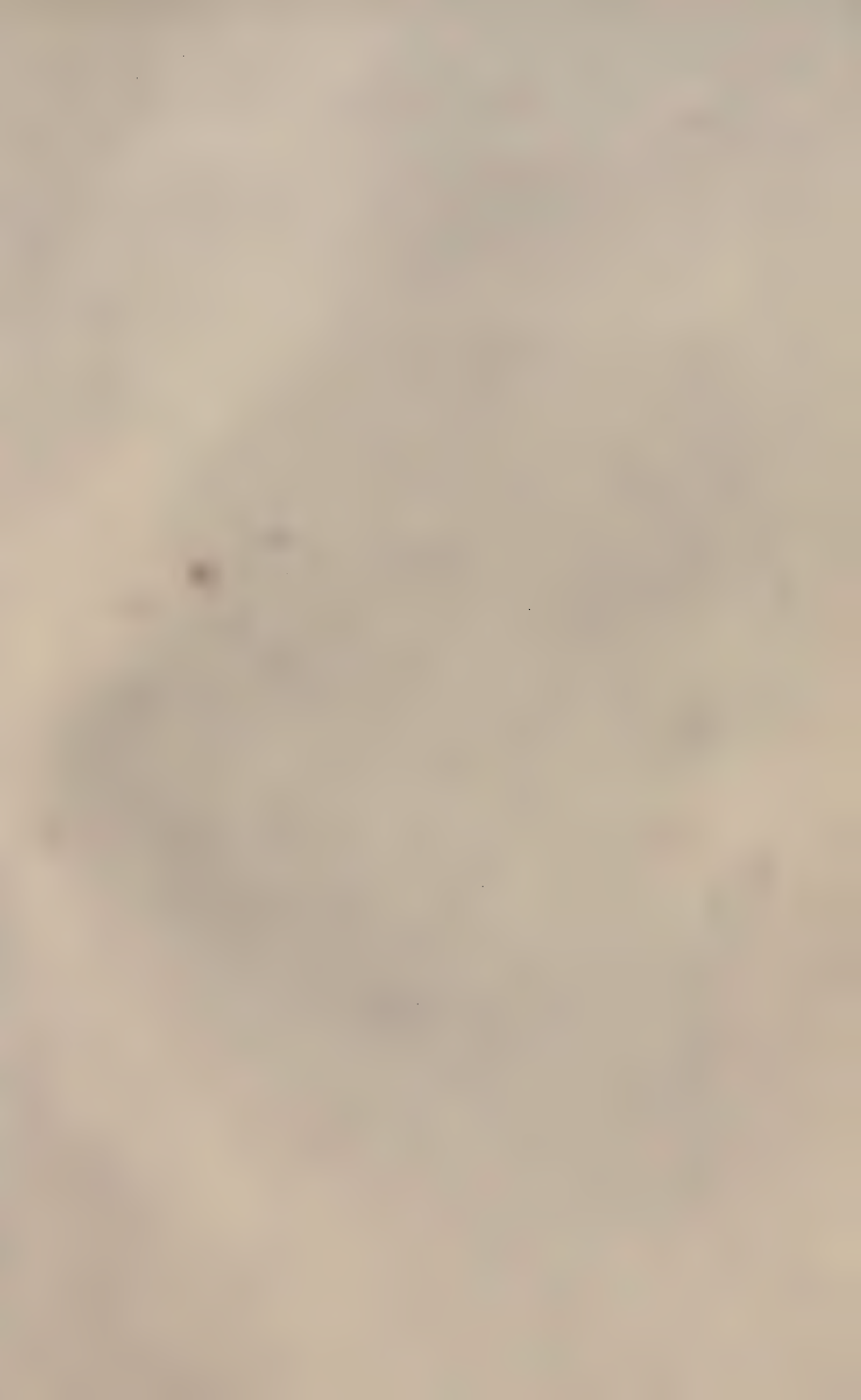
"Here, here," shouted Morton, beckoning to Arnold, and at the same time throwing him a rope—"Come this instant, in the lull of the waves,—never mind a cold bath for once.—Here's a burden worth your care, and not fit for those rude fellows yonder."

Arnold did as he was directed, snatched the rope, made it fast to a line of posts and rails which ran a little way inland, and then, regardless of the waves which now rolled

in and threatened to drive him back, struggled on towards the boat, without once losing his firm hold, or quailing under the rush and the roar, that might have baffled a less determined and enterprising spirit.

But his greatest difficulties were yet to be encountered. The boat was now heaving, and floating back. What he had to do must be the work of a moment, and a crowd was already gathering behind him, all clinging to the rope, and so threatening to impede his passage back to the shore. But for the tremendous power and determination of Morton, the momentary chance would have been lost. Standing up in the boat, and shouting to the people with a voice and attitude of command, he drove them back from the line, until Arnold, laden with an apparently lifeless burden, passed along, sometimes lifted from his footing, sometimes overwhelmed by the dashing waves, but never losing his firm hold, either of the rope that was to guide his course, or of the fair but helpless figure which he encircled in one arm.

When at last he gained the shore, beyond the line of rushing water, Arnold was so completely exhausted, that, believing he bore only the lifeless body of some female who had already ceased to breathe, he rested himself and his burden on the turf, until help could be obtained to enable him to reach the nearest house. This was the fisherman's cottage, already described; and folding some dry garments, which were freely offered, around his senseless charge, Arnold hastened on with fresh vigour, and soon gained the shelter of that humble tenement, where the kind heart of its only occupant, and her brightly-blazing fire, were accustomed to impart an air of comfort and repose, in spite of the simple and rude aspect of the dwelling itself.





Loud were the exclamations of wonder and affright, uttered by the fisherman's widow on this occasion, when the door of her cottage was first burst open, and the feet of strong men were heard upon the floor, before she had time to throw light upon the scene so as to enable her to distinguish its real character and importance. The voice of Arnold, however, gave her assurance, and hastily lighting her lamp, her voice sunk into tones of the lowest sympathy and compassion, as she shook her head, and sighed, and uttered many half expressions indicative of her own absence of all hope that any spark of life was yet remaining.

"Stir up your fire," said Arnold; "and you, my good fellows," he added, turning to the men, "take this, and leave us alone. If I mistake not, there is more work to do out yonder, and the fewer we are here the better."

"And now," said he to the woman of the cottage, so soon as the men were gone, "bolt that door of yours, and come here and help me. There is life left yet, or I am very much mistaken."

The old woman shook her head, still wholly incredulous; but she came nevertheless, and applied herself as promptly and as willingly to all which Arnold directed her to do, as if she had shared with him the brightening hope which gave life to all his exertions.

"A fair young creature!" sighed the old woman; "no doubt very dear to somebody;—a heavy loss—a grievous loss!"

And so she went on, moaning and lamenting in a kind of under tone, while Arnold uttered not a word, nor scarcely allowed himself to breathe so that he could have been heard, until both were startled by a sudden movement,—a fluttering breath, and then a heavy sigh, and then a

more awful paleness on the cheek—a deeper purple on the lips—and such a rigid stiffening of the limbs, as it seemed to those who gazed and watched, that death alone was capable of producing.

The old woman shook her head again, with an expression of countenance which plainly said, “It is all over now.” And then she added audibly again,—“A fair young creature—very lovely—no doubt very dear.”

Utterly hopeless now, even if not before, the old woman relaxed in her exertions, and only sat on her low seat, with the head of the girl resting in her lap, drawing out with her fingers the long soft tresses of her auburn hair, and wiping from them the salt water, which had matted them together in one entangled mass.

It now rested with Arnold to apply every restorative which could be obtained in that humble place, and to use every available means which in such an emergency it was possible for his memory to recall. Nor were his efforts unrewarded. Before many moments elapsed, a more living tone was observable in the complexion—a more relaxed state of the muscles—another slight movement—another sigh,—and then the eyelids fluttered, and the lips trembled with a momentary consciousness.

“All is right now,” whispered Arnold to the old woman. “Here is the pulse of life—feel here.”

The old woman pressed her hard-worn fingers upon the fair rounded arm, which lay as white as snow extended over the coarse coverlet in which the figure had been wrapped, and she too felt a fitful and uncertain pulse—now beating, and now gone; but still returning, and becoming more and more like healthy life.

For a long time, however, before there was any intelligible utterance, Arnold could detect an expression of

uncasiness flitting over the fair face. Sometimes one hand was raised to grasp or search for something, and then dropped down despairingly, with such a moan of agony and disappointment, that Arnold grew, if possible, more anxious and distressed than when despairing of that precious life, which now seemed only lent again to bring with its returning consciousness a quicker sense of all the "ills that flesh is heir to."

"What is it, dear?" said the old woman, involuntarily, for she also had begun to catch the idea that something precious had been lost. "What is it you are seeking?" she continued to ask, in a voice so full of kindness and compassion, that like a mother's fondness it seemed to reach the heart of that young creature; and raising her eyes for a moment to look around her, the tears burst from them in a free and copious flood, and sobbing like a child without restraint, her whole frame became relieved by nature's genial overflow.

Warmth and repose were all which now were needed, and Arnold, feeling that the intense interest which filled his own mind might disturb rather than soothe, and that, in short, the nursing needed now was woman's work, not his, he gave strict charges in relation to all which was to be done, and then left the cottage for a short time, in order to make himself acquainted with the fate of the vessel and the remainder of her passengers and crew.

It was with great satisfaction he now learned that the storm had abated soon after he had left the shore, and that although fears were entertained respecting the fate of those who had rashly trusted to their own strength, rather than to the directions of the captain or the undaunted crew who manned the boat, yet that by far

the larger proportion were already landed safely and unhurt,—thanks to the astonishing exertions of that strange man, of whom no one seemed to know anything beyond what he had done that day, nor did many allow themselves to say more, than that he was a desperate fellow, with whom they would rather come in contact as a friend than a foe.

The fact was, they had all been ordered right and left, and made completely subservient to his master-spirit, while the storm lasted, and one purpose occupied all hands, one fear all hearts. Now that the danger was over, however, and people, tired and buffeted, began to reflect upon what they themselves had done and suffered, how their personal dignity had been set at nought, their very lives and limbs made use of by that man;—and what was he to order them?—now that these feelings had time to gather form and strength, no one liked to acknowledge that the man held any right to deal with them as he had dealt, nor scarcely indeed were willing to allow him any credit for good motives in what he had done.

Little, however, did Mad Morton care for this. He saw it all, he knew it was in human nature, and it only afforded him food for bitter sarcasm and coarse laughter, as he joked with one and then another, chuckling over the subservient slaves he had made of them; and more than ever did Arnold wonder, as he saw him now, at the strange contradictions of his nature, making him at one time an angel of benevolence, at another a demon of malignity and scorn.

But to return with Arnold to the cottage. Here everything was changed. A glowing fire, already harmonised with the bright and altered countenance of that lovely girl, so lately stamped with the strange and appal-

ling hues of death, now smiling, and welcoming his return, yet evidently anxious for some intelligence.

"Perhaps," thought Arnold, "she has lost a parent or a friend. Would that I had some pleasant tidings to relate."

But no; his curiosity was soon at an end, for speaking frankly, as it was her nature to speak, she asked him hastily if he had been again to the wreck.

"I have," said Arnold.

"And what is found?" said she.

"All the lives are saved," he answered, for he wished to speak encouragingly, "with the exception of one or two."

"And the property?" she asked, still more eagerly.

"Of that I heard nothing," he replied.

"Not of a pocket-book or writing-case being found?"

"No, I should scarcely think that probable."

"Poor Henry!" exclaimed the lady, as she clasped her hands together; "what is to become of you, and me?"

"Can I make any inquiry?" asked Arnold.

"I will bless your name for ever," she replied, "if you will find me that little packet. But no, you never will find it. It is a heavy case, with steel clasps. It would not be likely to float. Do you think it would?"

"Did you carry it about your person?" asked Arnold.

"Always in my hand," she replied, "in a kind of reticule. There was precious money in that case, and I chose, unfortunately, to be the bearer of it myself."

"After every minute detail had been elicited, Arnold returned to the shore, and finding the captain and some of the sailors still there, endeavouring to save whatever article of value could be rescued from the wreck, he explained the nature of the loss which the young lady had sustained; and after liberal promises of reward to any

one who should restore the lost property to its right owner, Arnold recollected, with some chagrin, that he had neglected to make himself acquainted with the name of the individual to whom application was to be made.

On hastening back to the cottage, this mystery was soon cleared up. Edith Egerton was the name of the young lady, and as Arnold returned to the captain, he could not help thinking to himself, that Edith Egerton was rather a pretty name.

Nor was the lady herself in any personal recommendation at all unworthy of such a distinction. It is true Arnold had seen her under every disadvantage, for even on her recovery from the chill and the torpor which bore so frightful a resemblance to death, even when restored to animation, and in some measure to the enjoyment of her natural powers, she could but make her appearance in the coarse wrappings and uncouth habiliments of the venerable woman, whose motherly care was not the less acceptable at such a time because it had no costly robes to offer. Even had her recent escape from the devouring waves left her mind at liberty to think on subjects of trifling moment, Miss Egerton was not a young lady whose habits of mind and conduct rendered her a slave to appearances; and she could now smile with the most perfect simplicity and composure at the strange figure she was making, while preparing to proceed, under the care of Arnold, to the place of her original destination.

The address by which Arnold was to be guided, was the number of a house in a respectable street, well known in the town of M——, and it was not without considerable curiosity that he listened to repeated exclamations from his companion relative to some friend, or perhaps a brother,—husband he did not think it could

be,—as the lady wore no ring; these and other expressions strongly indicating that the Henry of whom she often spoke, was one whose spirit ruled over the whole sphere of her existence.

As the carriage which had been obtained for the purpose of conveying them drew near to the outskirts of the town, Miss Egerton laid her hand impressively upon the arm of Arnold, and said, in a very earnest voice, “You will keep my secret?”

“What secret?” asked Arnold, entirely at a loss to imagine to what the lady alluded.

“Of my lost money,” she replied. “Henry must never know that. And yet, how to keep it from him—”

She was evidently labouring under some great perplexity; yet upon such half confidence Arnold could not presume; and he had nothing left but to promise the most implicit obedience to her wishes.

“We shall be very late,” said Arnold as the carriage rolled along the silent streets—“or rather, early.”

“Not too late for my brother,” observed Miss Egerton. “I wish anything could persuade him to let the day be day, the night, night. But see, we are here already.”

As she said this the carriage stopped, and, true enough, a light might be seen in one of the lower rooms, glimmering through the shutters of the house which Miss Egerton had described as her home.

“What shall I do?” said she, suddenly checking her great eagerness to alight, and laying her finger on her lip, as if to think a moment. Henry himself will have to come to the door, and that will never do.”

Of course Arnold offered his services, and had already placed his foot on the step of the carriage to descend, when Miss Egerton implored him not to move, but to sit

back in the carriage until she had spoken with her brother. With these directions Arnold the more willingly complied, on reflecting that after those terrific scenes through which the lady had so recently passed, a brother and a sister might have much to converse about between themselves, which would render the presence of a stranger neither appropriate nor agreeable.

"I will return to you in a moment," said the lady, as she left the carriage, "do not go away until I have spoken to you again."

Arnold faithfully obeyed the directions he had received, and sat far back in the carriage, not even looking out when he heard the bolt of the door undrawn, although he felt the greatest curiosity to witness an interview which appeared to be involved in some little mystery. Before the bolt was withdrawn, however, he had heard the steps, as he thought, of a lame person in the passage; but he felt sure, from the sounds of joyful recognition which soon afterwards caught his ear, that the tenderest affection existed between the two parties now unexpectedly meeting after a long separation; and but for the lady's request that he would not go, he would greatly have preferred leaving them alone, to enjoy a reunion so happily effected.

Before Arnold was prepared for it, however, the lady returned to the carriage, all joy and gratitude, and insisted upon presenting him to her brother. "He will not allow me to be the only one to thank you for saving my life," said she, "besides which, I wish that every one who knows me should know my brother, and admire him as much as I do."

In another moment, Arnold was ushered into the room, which appeared to be a kind of library, not inelegantly

arranged, though the style and costliness of its furniture was not such as would strike the eye.

On a couch, drawn very near the fire, reclined the graceful figure of a young man, whose limbs were partially concealed by the rich drapery of an Indian shawl, which lay, as if by chance, across the couch; he did not rise entirely from his recumbent posture when Arnold entered, and yet received him with a graceful cordiality, which left no doubt that it was bodily infirmity alone which prevented any further advance towards his welcome guest.

Arnold thought, as he approached and looked into his face, now partially hidden by the green shade of the lamp which stood upon the table, that he had never seen so interesting a countenance. The complexion of the invalid was sallow, and a profusion of wild black hair flowing apparently at will, threw a still darker shade upon the brow; but his high thin features, so delicately formed, and the flashing of dark piercing eyes, which even that dim light could not conceal, gave a character of almost more than human intelligence to the figure upon which Arnold gazed with mingled admiration and pity.

Henry Egerton was about the age of Arnold. His sister was older. She might be five-and-twenty, though we have called her a girl; but unlike her brother, there was in her complexion, movements, and general appearance so perfect an exemplification of youthful energy, in all its healthy exuberance; there was, too, such a fond confiding simplicity in her manner, that it was extremely difficult to suppose her anything but a girl; and it was evident that her brother, though younger than herself, had obtained over her whole mind and character the kind of mastery which it is natural for youth and inex-

perience to concede to riper years—perhaps still more natural for woman to concede to man.

After the first compliments of a new acquaintance, commenced on terms of deep gratitude and obligation, were over, there were still many questions to ask, and many expressions of profound astonishment, and even horror, to utter, as Miss Egerton described her first apprehensions of peril, and the general confusion and distress which ensued: the remainder of her story had to be completed by Arnold, and he went through all the circumstances with a manly and straightforward regard to truth, neither influenced on the one hand by the praises which his own exploits called forth, nor on the other by the false delicacy that would have concealed the facts, rather than have elicited the praise.

“And you have been successful?” said the brother, hastily turning to his sister, when Arnold had concluded his narrative.

“Oh! yes;” she replied; but a deep blush stole into her face as she said this, and Arnold thought for a moment what a beautiful creature he had rescued from the waves! Perhaps he was the more struck with her appearance, that before this the lady had seated herself by the table, where a strong light from the lamp fell directly upon her face; and having thrown aside the shawl which the woman of the cottage had wrapped around her head, her beautiful hair fell in scattered tresses loosely around her neck and temples, she herself evidently caring little about where it strayed.

Arnold was quick to perceive the dilemma into which Miss Egerton was likely to be plunged by the close questioning of her brother, although he knew little of the particulars of her story, beyond the facts which she had

urged him not to reveal. And such was his love of truth in its purity and integrity, that he almost trembled for her, lest she should be betrayed into a violation of its laws.

"But you never wrote to me, to tell me the good news," the brother went on to say, "and I had really begun to despond."

"I had set my heart upon an agreeable surprise," replied Miss Egerton.

"Woman like!" observed her brother, smiling, "and so you really brought the money with you?"

"Yes," said Miss Egerton, still with a burning cheek.

"But the shipwreck?" asked her brother. "I cannot understand how you have kept the money? It seems to me, that you have lost everything but your own precious self. You have surely not lost the money. Have you?"

"Oh, no," replied Miss Egerton, "but we will talk about that to-morrow."

This was enough for Arnold. The beauty of that fair brow to him was entirely gone; and, rising from his seat, he wished the brother and sister cordially good night; but not without leaving his card upon their table, and expressing to the brother his earnest wish that their acquaintance might not end with that short interview.

CHAPTER XVII.



“YOU are a lucky fellow,” said Arthur Hamilton to his friend Arnold, a few days after the event which has just been described, as they walked together towards the scene of their accustomed occupations.

“In what way?” asked Arnold, “I wish you would prove your words. I fancy there are not many persons who would willingly exchange their luck for mine. Pray explain your meaning; for the last thing I should think of, would be that of being esteemed a lucky man?”

“Why, in the first place,” said Arthur, “you take to this horrible embankment, as if it was the most interesting thing in the whole universe; and what is more, I believe you actually understand something about it; while I am in a state of such blank ignorance, that I am utterly destitute of a single idea, beyond the simple notion of water having a trick of finding its own level. Indeed, I have never ventured a remark on the subject, but twice, since I came into the office, and I was wrong both times.”

“If you call it luck,” said Arnold, “to know a little more than you do at present, it is a kind of luck in which you may soon be more fortunate than I am; for

if you will spend twice as much thought as I have spent on the subject, you will know twice as much as myself."

"Ah! that is the plague of my life," said Arthur, "one must *think* about such things, and I hate thinking. In fact, who *could* think, with a spirit beyond that of a mole; who *could* think about all this earth, and puddle, and abomination? Can anything be more hideous altogether than the scene along this shore? and yet you seem to like it."

"It is my duty," said Arnold, "and in that way, I believe I really do like it."

"That is just what I said," replied Arthur, "and that is precisely why I call you such a lucky fellow. You have such a comfortable and desirable talent for liking anything it is right to like; while I am perpetually troubled with aversions, setting in the same way."

"I don't think," observed Arnold, "that it is in this instance simply that I like the business because it is right to like it. The more I think and puzzle my brain, and exercise my ingenuity, and conquer difficulties, in this precise line of occupation, the more I grow to like it, and to think it really interesting."

"I wish," said Arthur, "you would give me a single idea—just one, about this embankment; I am to dine one day, by especial favour, with Sir James, and as Mr. Dalrymple will be present, I confess I should like to come out on the occasion with a little more force than I am accustomed to display."

"Come here, then, with me," said Arnold, and he drew his friend along with him to a green eminence on which he often stood, making his own observations upon sea and land; he then entered into a long and minute description of the plans he had himself formed, for accom-

plishing the great work which Mr. Dalrymple had undertaken; but respecting which he so seldom communicated with those around him, that Arnold was left to form his own designs, and to work upon them in idea, until the master-mind by which his own was directed, should divulge some more mature, or more ably conceived plan.

Had he penetrated the secrets of that mind he would have seen, that so far from having anything extraordinary to divulge, its powers and its interests were gone into an entirely different channel, leaving to work-people, and especially to Arnold, the practical arrangement of all that was likely to be effected for some time to come. The great object with Mr. Dalrymple was in reality not to *complete* the embankment, but to keep Sir James Crawford his friend, by keeping him pleased, satisfied, and quiet; and thus to make use of his name and influence as stepping-stones to that further eminence which he was intent upon attaining.

The worthy baronet, occupied entirely by one idea, had always been slow to perceive where it wanted the same charm to others which it continued to possess for himself; and in the present instance, the business-like manner of Mr. Dalrymple completely misled him as to the degree of interest with which in reality he regarded the subject on its own account. In fact, the adventurous engineer had far-reaching views which merely took in the embankment as a step by the way; and even now he was carrying on a spirited contest for appointment to an office of great responsibility, in connection with some public works of utility and importance about to be commenced on a very extensive scale. Under these circumstances, and encouraged by hopes of success, it became an object with Mr.

Dalrymple to associate himself in the way of business with some one whose position in society, as well as his ability and natural talent, would be advantageous to his own character and influence, as adding weight to the confidence on which he already began to calculate, in throwing himself upon public opinion for its favour or regard.

At one time Mr. Dalrymple had thought seriously of raising Arnold Lee to this post of distinction, but the fact of his bearing in some degree the disgrace of his father's name, added to a natural tendency on the part of Arnold to shrink from the society which he could no longer meet on equal terms; his stern integrity too, that would not yield even to the strongest temptation to appear other than what he was, or to assume in his dress and habits what his actual means were unable to support, all these circumstances were so many drawbacks and disadvantages, in the opinion of Mr. Dalrymple, not to be overcome; and looking upon Arnold as the world looked at the present moment, he was but too much disposed to regard him as a being who had sunk out of the pale of respectable society, and not in a position to be taken up without injury and loss to any one who might otherwise have indulged a desire to make so benevolent an experiment.

But if Arnold, with all his superiority of worth and talent, was still evidently inadmissible to this honour, there was one who carried about with him in his outward bearing more signs of promise, and more hope of being eligible for such distinction. Arthur Hamilton was far indeed from that excess of prudence and integrity which stood in the way of Arnold's worldly interests. It is true he knew little of the business in which he was engaged, Mr. Dalrymple wished he knew more, for that was

in his opinion the only thing likely to hinder so appropriate a bestowment of his own favour; and this he saw no reason why time and attention should not overcome. On all other points Arthur was exactly the kind of person he would have chosen to associate himself with. He was well connected—a circumstance of immense importance in the eyes of Mr. Dalrymple—he was attractive in his manners, gentlemanly, and very popular; for the catastrophe of his father's death, and the loss of his property through the selfishness and duplicity of a man whose memory was universally hated, had excited in his favour a general feeling of sympathy and strong interest, which he managed very agreeably to himself to keep up; and even to strengthen into something like a universal liking, which met him wherever he went with kind welcomes and cheerful smiles, both from the aged and the young.

How much of this was owing to a fashionable exterior, and to a lavish expenditure of means which he never thought of as coming to an end, it is perhaps unnecessary to enquire. It was sufficient for him, and for the purposes of Mr. Dalrymple, that the best society in the town of M—— agreed in calling Arthur Hamilton a noble-hearted, frank, and generous fellow, in thinking no party complete without him, and in considering him altogether a most entertaining and delightful companion.

But to return to the conversation between him and Arnold on the shore; for simple as it seemed at the moment, there were consequences of some weight depending upon what should there transpire.

“But,” said Arnold, fearing to tire his companion with the dry details of business to which he was so unaccustomed to listen patiently, “you have called me a lucky

fellow for more reasons than one. I should like to know in what else I am so fortunate?"

"Why, above all," said Arthur, "that shipwreck. When the storm that brought death to some, and the loss of property to all, brought an angel floating in the water to you; so that you had only to stretch out your arms, and the waves placed her gently in your possession, and you restored her to her friends amidst weeping and acclamation; and behold! on the morrow you are a hero."

"A hero, indeed!" said Arnold, laughing. "Don't I look like one?"

"A little out of taste, I confess, just now," said Arthur, "a little out of the Corsair line of heroism, while engaged in constructing an embankment; but yet a hero, for are not the public papers full of your exploits? Here am I eaten up with a desire to be in the papers, and yet unable to gratify my taste."

"Not as a wood-cut, I presume," observed Arnold.

"Why, no," replied his friend, running his fingers through his rich and beautiful hair. "I confess that is a height of popularity beyond my ambition to attain; unless, indeed, I wanted to be cured of personal vanity for life."

"And the angel herself," said Arnold, "what would you give me for that item in my good fortune, provided I could make it over to you?"

"Seeing I have already a good angel of my own," replied Arthur, "it would not become me to give much. And now that we speak of Kate Staunton," he continued, "what do you think, Arnold, of that terrible mischance of hers, in letting slip from her fingers the Hatherstone estate? For myself, I confess I am not much addicted to pleasing old gentlemen, or old ladies either, but before I would have let that go——."

Arthur Hamilton shook his head and shrugged his shoulders, as if unwilling to give fuller expression to that conduct of Kate's which, whatever might be its motive, he evidently regarded as the height of absurdity.

"You should have faith in poor Kate, as I have," replied Arnold.

"Faith? yes," said Arthur. "I know there is not a better girl under the sun; but there are certain romantic, self-sacrificing notions of hers about right and wrong, in which I cannot go along with her."

"You would be a nobler fellow than you are," observed Arnold, "if you *did* go along with her. In some respects Kate is an example to us all."

"And yet," observed Arthur, "it has sometimes occurred to me, that a man does not want such a pattern of goodness and principle—such a never-ending *example* in his wife; for besides putting one to perpetual shame and humiliation, from a sense of one's own inferiority, it takes away all the pleasure and the zest of reasonable fault finding. Beyond this, these self-denying women, while they live single, are all right; they may fret, and pine, and hunger, if they like: who cares? But look you, when they drag another person into their self-denials, it becomes quite a different sort of thing—when they sacrifice another person's interests along with their own, all through some romantic notions in which that person takes no part, the partnership itself becomes a very questionable kind of good."

"If I did not think you jesting," observed Arnold, "I should say you were unworthy of my cousin Kate."

"Perhaps I am," replied Arthur; "but at all events the total loss of the Hatherstone property touches me very feelingly: and I cannot imagine how any girl of common sense could be guilty of such egregious folly—to

say nothing of the injustice towards myself, for I had built nobody knows what pleasant castles upon that foundation."

"I do not know," said Arnold, "what has been the real cause of this unlucky affair, which I regret almost as much as you, for I have not exchanged a word on the subject with my cousin; but sure I am, if she has had any choice in the matter, that the reasons of her conduct have been the most honourable, if not the wisest, by which a woman could be influenced; and I only wish you had the same feeling towards Kate as I have myself, for I could stake my life upon her faithfulness—her sincerity—her love."

"You speak warmly," said Arthur, slightly colouring. "You are the only man on earth who is really worthy of that girl. I have always said so, and I shall always be of the same opinion. But I am not willing to give her up, even to you, Arnold. Oh! no, no, don't mistake me there. If therefore you have any views of that kind, I tell you to your face I defy you, and I can hate you as well as another man."

"My dear fellow," said Arnold, compelling himself to laugh, "how can you be so passionate—so absurd? In the first place you speak lightly of my cousin, and compel me to defend her, and then you would quarrel with me for taking her part. But, come, smooth down your ruffled mane, and listen to me while I talk about this embankment. I want to explain to you a bright idea which has dawned upon my mind; and as to my cousin Kate, much as I love her, believe me, my heart, as you speak of hearts, is just at this moment as likely to be carried away by yon seagull as by her."

"Forgive me, Arnold," said Arthur: "I am a fool, and something worse. But it is of no use calling myself

names. How that noble-hearted girl can love me as she does, is a mystery beyond my power to solve."

"We will leave that question for the present," said Arnold, "for don't you see the tide is turning, and I want to explain to you my bright idea."

As Arnold said this, he led his friend to a point of observation from whence he directed his attention to the nature and inclination of the shore, describing to him with so much clearness, animation, and interest, the plan he had in view, that Arther Hamilton for the first time in his life began to think there might be real pleasure in conquering the difficulties, even of sand and water.

"I declare I begin to understand the thing," said he, after listening and looking for some time. "I do believe I shall make an engineer after all!"

A long discussion followed this hopeful exclamation, for Arnold was delighted to find his friend listening with patience to what he had to say on any subject of business, still more on one which was likely to afford them both sufficient occupation, and on which it could not but be a pleasure to be employed together, provided there was a mutual interest in the success of their labours.

From this consultation the two friends returned to their humble quarters, much happier, if not also much wiser, than they had set out.

A few days after this conversation took place, Arthur Hamilton was invited to dine at Waverton, in company with Mr. Dalrymple. The party was to be small and select—business the great topic to be discussed; and Arthur formed that important item in the affair, which had been described by Mr. Dalrymple as the "very talented and hopeful young gentleman" who had been for some time employed in his office. In what way

employed, the credulous baronet never troubled himself to ask ; but, pleased at once with Arthur's gentlemanly bearing and prepossessing manners, he admitted him freely into his confidence, and even appealed to him at different points in the conversation, as if he had been an experienced engineer, thoroughly acquainted with his profession.

Of all the dull days Arthur Hamilton had ever spent in his whole life, this was perhaps the dullest. While Lady Crawford remained at the table, his powers of endurance were not very painfully put to the test, for he was always in his element with an easy fashionable woman who could listen with willing ear, not only to the popular gossip of the neighbourhood, but also to any little flattering embellishment which his own ingenuity and taste might throw into the conversation.

But alas ! ladies cannot sit at the dinner table all day ; and Arthur was soon left to make one of a trio, still more insupportable to him in its topics of interest, than in its native and intrinsic stupidity.

What made the infliction of this trial unspeakably more painful to Arthur, was the necessity he felt under of supporting his part in the conversation with manly dignity, and with at least a show of common sense ; so that at the very time he would willingly have spilled the wine, kicked the table over, or done any other desperate and definite thing calculated to put an end to his misery at once, he was obliged to lean forward, and listen, and look grave and knowing, and sometimes to nod his head as if he knew more than he thought it respectful to utter in presence of his superiors, in order to maintain his place in that good opinion which he expected to find so useful to him in after life.

Not that Arthur Hamilton was at all the character to have placed himself in this position willingly, and still less by design, even had the greatest worldly advantages awaited his patient endurance, but having fallen into the position without calculating upon what its requirements would be, he reasoned with himself that it could only last for a day, that for the impatience of a moment it would be worse than folly to throw up his chance as an engineer for life, and above all, that once set free from this terrible infliction, he would see Sir James Crawford at the bottom of his embankment, rather than be caught in the same snare again.

While these thoughts were passing through the mind of Arthur Hamilton, the conversation took a turn which really interested him, in spite of himself; for it related to those precise difficulties which Arnold had been so long and now so successfully planning to overcome. At once he saw that the wisdom of his superiors was at fault, and with that natural quickness which formed a part of his impetuous character, he threw his whole interest and attention into the subject under discussion.

Had Arthur Hamilton felt no consciousness of being able to throw a light on the subject himself, he would still have found it very difficult to listen with patient endurance while the two gentlemen pondered, and puzzled their brains, and talked only of what could *not* be accomplished, neither of them having an idea to suggest as to what *could*; but, big with this idea himself, it was very natural that he should take up the discussion with more than usual energy; and although not accustomed on other occasions to pay thier inferiors much respect, Mr. Dalrymple as well as the baronet, listened attentively on this, while Arthur went on to describe in the clear and circumstantial

manner which Arnold had used, all the particulars impressed upon his own mind in relation to the great difficulties of the embankment, hitherto deemed insurmountable.

As Arthur Hamilton went on with his explanation, using all the business-like terms which his quick ear had caught from his friend, a growing respect might have been observed in the looks and the manner of his two companions towards himself. At last the great leading feature of Arnold's plan was disclosed. The two elder gentlemen exchanged nods, and expressive looks; the interest of the baronet became intense; and before Arthur allowed himself time to pause, he struck the table with his clenched hand, exclaiming as he did so "That's the very thing I have wanted to be at these twenty years! Now we see, Mr. Dalrymple, that a young head *may* sometimes be wiser than old ones."

Half flattered, half amused, and more than half inclined to treat the whole matter as a pleasant jest to be shared and enjoyed with his friend, Arthur received in full the compliments and commendations of the two older gentlemen, and laughed within himself at the idea of how well he had acted the part of a man of business, and a very knowing one too, for the first time in his life.

Sudden and unexpected honours, however, often prove severer tests of competency than it is at all agreeable to be tried by; and so closely was the conversation followed up, and so earnestly was Arthur pressed for further and deeper knowledge, that he became seriously uneasy in his new position; and after returning many times to the original idea, as the only point of sure footing on which it was possible for him to stand; after turning every new suggestion back again into that channel, until it was

impossible, with any degree of credit to himself, to pursue this fugitive mode of defence any longer, he looked at his watch, as if suddenly recollecting some important engagement, and rising from the table with the air of a man who has well earned his title to distinction, he resisted all the entreaties of Sir James to prolong his stay, bowed low to all the respectful and complimentary expressions with which his departure was deplored, and then hurrying out of the house, laughed heartily to himself as he proceeded on his way by moonlight towards the little village, where he and Arnold were now stationed in order to superintend the "works," as their operations along the line of shore began to be called.

It was late that night before Arthur Hamilton reached the wayside inn at which he and his friend found humble accommodation; yet although Arnold had been occupied with a day of more than usual labour and fatigue, he had not retired to rest, but was seated in the little parlour of the inn, with an open letter of great length laid beside him on the table, and his one candle burning down into the socket apparently without his knowledge. Add to this the dying embers of a neglected fire, and the place looked miserable enough, as contrasted with the warm and well furnished apartments which Arthur had so recently left.

Still it was not in the power even of this gloomy aspect thrown over surrounding things, to damp the mirthful spirit which the conversation at Sir James Crawford's had awakened; and after announcing to his friend that he had an excellent joke to communicate, Arthur Hamilton lighted his cigar amidst peals of laughter, without watching or waiting to see whether they were shared in by his friend.

At last even he was subdued by the voice of Arnold, which sounded more sad and serious than he had ever heard it before, as he said to him—"My dear fellow, do spare your laughter for this night. I have been reading a long account of my sister's dying words to my mother, and touching as these must naturally be to me, I am ashamed to say, there are circumstances connected with them which touch me yet more deeply,—which make me wild—mad—desperate!"

As Arnold said this, he threw the open letter from him, and raising his hair from his forehead with both hands, started up from the low posture in which he had been leaning over the table and stood erect, with a look of such wild and terrible expression, that Arthur began to fear some darker and more dreadful catastrophe than had even yet transpired, was about to be revealed in connection with the ill-fated family of his friend.

It was impossible for Arthur to explain his own jest, or even to say more that night about the circumstances which had amused his own fancy; and as Arnold did not appear disposed to enter into any further explanation, and not being naturally gifted with the strongest sympathies in the world, Arthur Hamilton retired to rest that night not too much concerned in the troubles of his friend to prevent his recurring with much amusement to the past scenes of the day.

The letter which Arnold Lee had been so attentively reading was from his mother, and in part to the following effect:—

"You know, dear Arnold, we often wondered at the depth and bitterness of your sister's grief. We did not think it natural to one of her character, that the mere falling off of pecuniary resources, or even the degradation

in the world's opinion with which such a loss is always accompanied, should produce a grief so insurmountable, and for a long time so utterly insensible to all consolation.

"I can now only wonder at the firmness which kept the real cause of this grief concealed, even from me, until the fading away of all worldly prospects,—but, beyond that, the happier substitution of heavenly things, had rendered her in a great degree indifferent to any praise or blame which the world might have to bestow, either upon herself or others.

"Ah! it might have formed a wholesome study for any man, in his pride and presumption,—in his love of beauty, and his love of wealth,—to hear the confession which I have listened to at intervals from this poor, faded, emaciated creature; for though kindness, and favouring circumstances, and the love of those she loved, might have done much to sustain her, no doubt the seeds of this fatal malady were in her constitution, and would eventually have prevailed over her once glowing and exuberant health. Indeed, I cannot better express my convictions on this subject, than in her own words, touched as they have lately been by a force and a wisdom for which we never gave her credit, until the near approach of death instructed her, and the light of divine truth illuminated her mind.

"‘Mother,’ said she to me one day—‘Do you believe in broken hearts?’

"I replied, ‘I believe that suffering of mind has much to do with disease of body, with weakness, and consequently with death.’

"‘But don’t you think,’ she observed, ‘it is rather in this way, that people are said to die of broken hearts? Excessive sorrow in the first instance makes them regard-

less of the common means of health and safety. Under the influence of this strong emotion they are reckless about what they do, as I was on that terrible day when I walked home in the steeping rain, and brought on the illness which followed. A person more at ease in mind than I was then, would have protected themselves from the rain, while I neither thought about nor felt it. And thus some people, if they knew my history, would say that I had died of a broken heart. Yet I feel, even now, that sorrow of itself would not have killed me, had I not given myself up to it with a blind recklessness which is—which must be—as much an offence in the sight of God, as it is a violation of his natural laws.’”

We will not repeat what was further stated in this letter, fully explaining, from the lips of the dying girl, those circumstances connected with her secret history, and thus inwoven with her deepest feelings, which have already been sufficiently described. It was not until all human events were losing their power, alike to interest or to disturb her feelings; not until the partial veil of human love, and human weakness, had been entirely withdrawn, and a holier light had dawned upon her soul, giving it new and clearer perceptions, even of familiar and surrounding things, that she could bring herself to speak, even to her mother, of the great shock and trial of her life—the one bitter drop in her cup, which, had all besides been smooth and sweet, would still have poisoned the whole draught to her.

It was, as Mrs. Lee too feelingly experienced, a melancholy task to watch this long struggle betwixt life and death—youth and disease—beauty and the grave; but after she knew all, how incomparably happier it felt to her, to consign her child even to that dark passage

upon which she was entering, so that it might but lead her in safety to a region of eternal rest and glory.—How blissful in comparison was this conclusion to the hopes she had so fondly indulged, rather than the committal of her cherished one to that long living death—that malady without a medicine or a cure—that dark imprisonment without a hope of respite—to which a fond and feeling woman is consigned by a union with one who marries her from sordid or inferior motives, and who wants the heart to appreciate the silent sacrifice of hers.

From this, the most suffering and dreadful doom which the world, with its many sorrows, could disclose, if the secrets of all hearts were laid bare,—from this long agony the dying girl had now escaped. The wrenching away of those chains which had eaten into her young life, had cost her no trifling amount of suffering at the time, but it was over now—well over; and she could lay her head in peace upon her mother's bosom, without a wish but to depart, that she might be with Him who knows what human sorrow and suffering is; and who is ever dearer to the sorrowing heart, for having trod this thorny path of ours, and walked before us in the gloomy valley, and tasted both of agony and death.

CHAPTER XVIII.



"WHAT is there we can be doing now, Betsy?" said Dorothy Dalrymple one morning to that busy personage, as she was engaged in the never-ending occupation which she called "putting things to rights."

"What is there we can be doing?" responded Betsy, in a tone of curious enquiry—"if I might speak my mind,"—but she hesitated at these words, well knowing that her *mind*, if once finding vent in words on the subject of her mistress's affairs, might not be altogether welcome, nor indeed so flattering as were some people's observations in the same quarter.

"Pray let me have it," said Dorothy, "if it is indeed your mind, as you call it. To have a person's real mind, if they have one, is exactly what I like."

"Humph!" said Betsy,—“that's as the case may be.”

"But let me hear *your* mind, at any rate," resumed her mistress. "It surely cannot be a bitter mind that you have against me."

"Why, no," replied Betsy; "you have been too kind to me and mine for that. I hope I am not ungrateful, Miss Dalrymple. I hope I know a friend from an enemy. I should be a fool else, for I've had a taste of both."

"But what is the mind, Betsy, that you were going to tell me about, and what is there for you and me to do? I like working with you. There is a spirit and a determination about you that suits my disposition."

"When we make bonfires together?"

"Oh! yes; that midnight fire was a glorious idea. And nobody knows a word about it beyond myself and you."

"And you have really gone about thanking these friends of yours?"

"Oh! yes. I have thanked them so warmly, and so pointedly, that in some instances I have made them blush, and then my triumph has been complete. But do not let us speak again of this stupidity—it is too absurd. Everything is stupid to me now, Betsy. What shall I do?"

"Get married, I suppose," replied Betsy, with an air of ineffable contempt.

"That is just the most stupid of all," said Dorothy.

"And that's been my opinion for long," responded her companion. "But if people will make fools of themselves, and ruin their prospects for life, it's of no use my speaking—no use in the world, Miss Dalrymple. I've said a good deal touching marriage in my time, but the world goes just its own way for all that."

"Perhaps you will be married yourself, some time, Betsy."

"I?" said the woman, swelling with a power of indignation that might have found vent in a louder peal of eloquence than ever issued from those lips before, but that at the precise moment when Betsy had risen to her utmost height, a knock was heard at the door, and half her work had yet to be completed before the little

parlour could be made perfectly neat, and ready for a reception room.

Had the bustling woman known who stood on the steps at this moment, much of her labour might have been dispensed with; for on replying to a second knock, in which Betsy detected a touch of the plebeian order, which made her linger and look back with some regret upon the result of her wasted efforts, who should she behold on opening the door but her brother James Burton—no longer the down-hearted, abject-looking man he had so lately been, but glowing with confidence, and again animated by his constitutional hope.

On hearing her servant exclaim at the door, "Why James, is that you?" Miss Dalrymple requested that he might be shown into the parlour where she was seated, as she wished to talk with him about his affairs and prospects; and as it was now too early in the day for any of her own friends to be expected, she had no objection to while away an hour in this or any other way that might furnish amusement for the passing moment.

"Well, James," said Dorothy, holding out her hand, for she was very cordial and familiar where neither her pride nor her prejudices were concerned. "I suppose," she continued, "you are making all things ready as fast as you can, for sailing?"

"Why as to that," said James, in his usual hesitating manner when his own mind was doubtful, which indeed it mostly was.

"That was a nice sum of money which I obtained for you," continued Dorothy, "was it not?"

"Why as to that," repeated James, "I've been thinking—"

"Not of returning it, I hope," said Dorothy.

"No, no," said James, "I'm not such a simpleton as that. I've been thinking, and my wife's been thinking—our James too, he's been thinking—we've all been thinking what a fine chance we have just now to double it."

"Don't listen to him another moment," said Betsy in a very earnest whisper, laying her hand upon the arm of her mistress. "He's been doubling his money ever since I knew him, and it has always turned out to be halving it instead; and that it will to his dying hour."

Dorothy could not help smiling to herself, but she still paid James Burton the respect to turn to him again and to enquire further into the project which he had in view, for it was very evident from his important and confidential manner, that he had called for the express purpose of divulging some very promising scheme, upon which his heart was set.

"I thought that by this time," added Dorothy, "you would have been almost ready to sail. They talk of the end of next month for the vessel your friends have chosen for you. Is there anything we can do to assist you in making preparations, for it must really be a great undertaking with a wife and so many children."

James Burton shook his head, and his countenance drooped into a very dolorous expression: his wife and children were his pathetic themes. He could never express what he felt touching *them*. He now fancied that it was altogether touching them, and not at all himself, that he had taken up his present views on the subject of emigration; and although assured by his cousin who had returned from that far-off region of the world to which he appeared destined, and by all who knew anything of the subject, that wives and children were estimated at a higher value there than here, James Burton

either did not give full credence to this statement, or did not wish to enhance the value of his family, already in some respects too precious.

"Is there anything we can do for you?" Miss Dalrymple enquired again, for it was not in her nature to be long in coming to the point.

"Why as to that," said James again, and his countenance now brightened, "there is a matter of some moment which I have come here for the purpose of breaking to you, as one may say; only that my sister Betsy keeps such a sharp look out. I think I should explain myself better if Betsy was not in the room at all."

"You surprise me," said Miss Dalrymple; "why Betsy is your best friend! Such a clever managing friend too—such a help—such a prop."

"Look you," said James Burton, "I acknowledge all that. No one knows or values our Betsy more than I do; but don't you think, Miss Dalrymple, there are times when a man may be propped a little too much—fairly carried off his own legs, as one may say,—made to walk upon another person's legs, if I may use the expression in your presence, Miss Dalrymple, and so feeling very much like being run away with—do you see?"

"I see, perfectly," replied Miss Dalrymple smiling. "Suppose then, Betsy, you leave your brother and me alone for a few minutes."

"That *is* an odd idea," observed Betsy, who nevertheless knew her duty too well not to comply with this request; but she took her revenge by such a look at her brother as she swept past him, that no words could have better made him understand how he was still accountable to her for what he might subsequently do, whatever

might be the nature of his conversation with her mistress, or whatever their two wise heads might decide upon together.

Feeling more at his ease after he had walked to the door and ascertained that it was really closed, James Burton now opened the business in hand by going so far back as to the seizure of his own person, his imprisonment, trial, and condemnation, with many lengthy details of facts already well known to his sole auditor, and which she would have found the greatest difficulty in listening to, but that her eyes were all the time engaged in glancing over a new work of engravings, which had just been offered to her acceptance.

“ Well ? ” said Dorothy, after every pause ; but already she was beginning to understand a little of the spirit of James Burton’s harangue. Already she could discover that the event of his trial and imprisonment, her own visit to his cell, the interest excited by his unjust sentence, and the attention he found himself just now attracting wherever he went, had made a very powerful impression on his mind, in short had been the means of originating there the singular idea, that, if not in reality a hero, he was in his own person an important and interesting man at the present moment, and altogether in a position to make very extensive demands upon the sympathy and support of the public.

As the speaker warmed with his subject, his language grew less embarrassed and more direct ; and as Dorothy smiled with a meaning in her looks which it was impossible for him to understand, and as she “ threw no cold water in his face,” as he expressed himself in relation to his sister, but listened as a lady ought to listen, he went on dilating upon all the favours he had received, and more

which he expected to receive from high and influential parties in the place, relating instances of flattery and condescension, drawing favourable conclusions from hints which he imagined to have been thrown out, and winding up with the grand climax of his ardent anticipations already shadowed forth in the dim prospect of an event which was to constitute the seal and bond of his security in a prosperous line of life for ever, which event existing at present only in belief, was no other than the invitation of James Burton to dine with the "*lord*" mayor, the aldermen, and common council, in full dignity and splendour.

"Only think of that, ma'am!" said the credulous and hopeful man, when he reached the glorious issue. "Only think of that!" he added, with a look which demanded congratulation, however premature.

"Ah! that," said Dorothy, "will be at the time of your leave-taking, I suppose."

"Leave-taking?" exclaimed James Burton, with extreme surprise; there will be no leave-taking then! Why, I shall be a made man for life after I have dined with the lord mayor—established—rooted—I and my children after me. What leave-taking should there be then!"

"Then you don't intend to go to Australia at all?" asked Dorothy, astonished in her turn.

"Australia!" exclaimed James Burton with the utmost contempt. "What should I go there for? Send the judges and the lawyers to Australia, if you like; but don't send me. No, no, Miss Dalrymple. I know a trick worth two of that."

"But, James, the mere eating of a dinner one day with the *lord* mayor, as you call him, wont help you to a dinner of your own the next."

"Won't it! Are you quite sure of that?"

"I do not see how it should."

"Nor I, neither. Mind me, I don't pretend to anything of that sort, nor I never had no gift at reasoning, as Betsy calls it, since I was a boy at school, and they beat me black and blue with a ruler. But I know that wiser men than me, and richer too, and consequently better men altogether, count no little upon these dinners, think themselves made men when they are invited to dine with somebody great and titled, as one may say."

"After all, James," said Dorothy, looking very grave; it strikes me you had better sail for Australia with the money that has been raised for the purpose, even after you have dined with the lord mayor."

"That is your real opinion, is it, Miss Dalrymple?"

"It is my very decided opinion."

"It is a very painful thing to me to dispute the opinion of one who has been so good to me and mine, and who is besides that spoken of as being so clever. But the thing is quite impossible, Miss Dalrymple; in short, I cannot with my large family afford to throw away so fine a chance, and to leave my fortunes all behind me in that manner."

"What chance do you mean, James?"

"The chance that lies before me now—as fine a chance as any man could wish to lay his hand upon."

"Of what?"

"Of—of—of—of getting on."

"How?"

"Every way."

"Every way, is often no way."

"Why, bless your heart, Miss Dalrymple, if I must speak out, they are all so fond of me. You never heard

such a stir as there is in the town about me, wherever I go. Why, I'm in the print-shops. People point at me as I go past, and gentlemen that never looked the way I was before, call out 'Burton, my good fellow,' and actually shake hands with me in the street!"

"But these gentlemen don't send you legs of mutton home for your table, do they?"

"That's all to come, Miss Dalrymple."

"Now that is just what you will find in Australia, James; and, with your family, I should think a plentiful table would be better than a shake of the hand from any man."

"It's not a bad thing, Miss Dalrymple, I'm free to own that: and Emma and the children are for the most part hearty at their meat."

"When they can get it."

"True, true—when they can get it."

"Then be advised by me, James. I've done a good deal to help you, and I shall be sadly disappointed if after all you refuse to go."

"My dear lady, I would go if I could see it wisdom to go; but, as I said before, it seems to me like flying in the face of common sense, now that this great luck has befallen me, to run away and leave it; besides which, I don't fancy they can spare me. It seems to me I'm wanted here. Why there will be nobody to fill my place."

"We shall feel it for a little while no doubt, James; but places generally fill up one way or another. Besides which, don't you know there is a turning-point in most people's lives, where they do more for their fame, and are really more talked about by going away than by remaining. I have read a great deal, James, and I always

find in books that great men, heroes, and those that set the world talking about them, go away—disappear like a blaze, or a flash of lightning, when at the height of their distinction, and so remain to be talked about for ever; while if they had settled down like common people, gone into a trade, or been seen every day in their ordinary clothes and character, they would soon have ceased to be thought anything of.”

“I shouldn’t wonder, Miss Dalrymple, but there *is* something in that. And yet, I don’t think *I* should either; for beyond and above being taken by the hand, as I have been taken lately, I have a little plan of my own for keeping things up, like.”

“What is it, James? You must let me into your secret. I am very curious indeed.”

James Burton fumbled in his pockets for a long time. They were very loose, and very large, yet not at all accustomed to contain much valuable matter. On the present occasion their contents appeared to be an immense quantity of loose papers, many of which were scattered on the floor in his fruitless attempts to draw out the whole mass at once. While gathering these up, and endeavouring to make some arrangement with the rest, he observed to Miss Dalrymple—“You have a strange, wheedling way of your own. One can keep nothing from you. I wouldn’t have Betsy know of this for any money, till it’s out, and then——!”

“My curiosity is immense,” said Dorothy, as he prepared to place the papers in her hands. “Do tell me what it is all about?”

“You shall see,” said the man, with an air of triumph.

“I think I should prefer your telling me,” said Dorothy.

“By no means, Miss Dalrymple. That would spoil all.”

"Just tell me the meaning—the subject," said Dorothy, really distressed at the sight of such heaps of confusion about to be poured into her lap. "I cannot—indeed I cannot do anything with these papers, unless you will first tell me what they are all about."

James Burton looked greatly disappointed; but as the lady actually thrust back his hands, and shrunk away from his offering, he was compelled to restrain his eagerness to pay her the high compliment which had for some time been destined to be laid at her feet in its present form.

Retreating a little under his severe chagrin, James Burton began to think in what words he could best explain himself.

"While I was in prison," said he, "though not before I expected to get out, it came into my mind that I would write a book. So far as I can see, everybody now-a-days, thrown into any extraordinary circumstances, writes a book; and who could have more to write about than *I*, James Burton. At first I found some difficulty, as you may suppose, but I soon discovered that beginning was everything—once fairly started, words came to my pen faster than I could write them. See here! see here!" he continued, exhibiting sheet after sheet, "this is all about the miser and his garden, and it's not finished yet; for I've counted the bricks in the garden wall, and measured the height of the door, and the length of frontage into the garden, and into the lane—it's all as exact—from the tabby cat that ran along the wall, to the rain-tub that stands in the corner. Policeman Jilks thinks I didn't see a tabby cat; but I know I did. It's all put down, you'll find it there, Miss Dalrymple. And then there's my cell in the prison—stone for stone—flag for flag—all true—

and the law court—bless your heart, but that's fine! you never read nothing to come up to that, I'll warrant—pillars, benches, judge and council, wigs and robes, and me standing there, and our Betsy!—if my book doesn't make a stir, Miss Dalrymple, when it's out, never take my word for anything again."

"Indeed I will take your word for it very willingly," said Dorothy, "but when is it to be?"

"It strikes me, that *now* is the very time. I shall never be more talked about than I am now, saving and excepting after the book; and so the sooner you can get all this put to rights, Miss Dalrymple, the better."

"Mercy on me!" exclaimed Dorothy, "am I to put your book to rights, James?"

"It's what I look to," he replied. "There's many would like to do it—many looking for the job; but as you've been so beyond them all in kindness; and, moreover, like myself, are a good deal talked about, and thought of, it struck me we might work together pleasantly—into one another's hands, as one may say."

"I am very much obliged to you," said Dorothy,—
"very much obliged to you, indeed; but you must allow me to give you a little bit of advice, James."

"As you please, Miss Dalrymple; but I don't feel to be particularly wanting advice just now."

"And yet I think you will see as I do, James, when I have explained myself fully."

"I don't think I shall, if it's anything likely to go against the book."

"By no means, James. I would have you write a book—a much better book than this."

"I don't see exactly how that should be."

"I'll tell you. Many good books are written, James,

that nobody sees or knows anything about—books that nobody reads, because the subject is not a pleasant one. A prison, for instance, is not a pleasant subject. It makes people gloomy and miserable. Besides which, everything is known about prisons that people want to know, and in some cases a good deal more. All low and disreputable people are acquainted with prisons. You would get no credit by such a subject, in any way. But suppose, now, you should write a book about Australia, would not that be doing something for yourself and for the world?"

"I must get there, first," said James Burton, "and they tell me the voyage is very long."

"But all the way you can be writing—writing about your voyage, and anything on shipboard. You'll get your hand in, and be quite perfect by the time you arrive."

"I should have thought all this," said James, returning to his papers, for which he already felt the deep affection of authorship—"I should have thought all this might have shown you that I had got my hand in. Early and late have I sat up over those pages—no, no, Miss Dalrymple, I can't consent to give them up."

"Then leave them to me, James, and let me publish them for you after you are gone, so that we may get up a reputation ready for your great work on Australia."

"That's not a bad idea, Miss Dalrymple."

"Leave it to me too, James, to get you off in style. If there is a stir about you now, what will there be when everybody is taking leave, and you are going off to a new country—the ship about to sail, and crowds of people on the pier, and on the shore, and shoutings, and wavings of handkerchiefs—Oh! there's nothing like that, James,

for making a man feel pleasant to himself, and pleased with everybody else."

"I must say it sounds as if there was something in it."

"Depend upon it there is a great deal."

"I shouldn't wonder but there is."

"Then you *will* really go, James, as we have planned for you; and write a book about Australia, and tell the people in England what they never heard before?"

"I'll be whipped if I wont."

"Come, come, you are a sensible man after all; and I wont let Betsy run you down again."

"Stop a bit—stop a bit," said James, as Miss Dalrymple opened the door for him to depart. Not a word to Betsy about the book!"

"Not a word, I promise you."

"Not about neither of 'um. For I declare, if I know which I like the thoughts of best. Only I guess, if left to myself, I should stick to the old 'un yet."

"But you *will* go, James?"

"Go? yes. They call it a new world, *that* out yonder. I'd bet anybody a trifle they'll think it new when they read my book."

"I've no manner of doubt but they will, James."

When Betsy Burton was called into the room after the settling of these important transactions, she saw upon her brother's countenance an expression of such triumphant delight, that her warm heart would immediately have offered its ready sympathy and congratulation, but for certain misgivings suggested by the smile which played upon the lips of her mistress, and which she had learned distinctly to understand.

"Not one word, Betsy," said Miss Dalrymple, in her most authoritative tone, "except to bid your brother

good-by. We have important business in hand ; but the first thing to be done, James, is to tell your wife and children that all must positively be ready by the end of this month."

James Burton was so exalted in his personal feelings, and so elated at the splendour of his prospects for the future, that it was with considerable difficulty he was induced to make his egress from the door without betraying to his sister by some suggestive hint, or some exulting allusion, what was the nature of that hopeful promise which seemed already to throw him and his whole family into the most radiant sunshine. Betsy, however, was not a person to be made a party to the flattering delusion in which he now rejoiced. Her contempt for all folly, and her hatred of all deception, from whatever kindly motive it might emanate, would soon have destroyed the fabric upon which Dorothy was building her only assurance of the poor man's actual departure from a country where he could have nothing to expect but disappointment and disaster, if not actual misery and starvation ; she therefore repelled all attempts on the part of Betsy to penetrate further into her plans, by assuming, whenever they were touched upon, that haughty and authoritative manner which could effectually silence even the tongue of Betsy Burton.

But while reserved and incommunicable in this quarter, Dorothy was active and busy in all others. Well knowing that nothing but the eclat of a departure which should make the impression of a distinguished event, would even now entirely reconcile that step to the parties most concerned, no pains were spared on her part to make her numerous friends acquainted with the time and place of the great leave-taking ; a circumstance which she suc-

ceeded in painting in such strong and interesting colours, that a large proportion of her visiting acquaintance began to be of the opinion, that they should like nothing better than to witness the farewells of the emigrants; and thus they offered a ready compliance with her wish that they should assemble on the spot at the time of the sailing of the vessel.

This, however, was not quite sufficient to attract those who could any evening witness a display of sorrow or excitement more extreme in its expression, and at the same time more graceful and refined. Why then should the friends of Miss Dalrymple disgust themselves by assembling on a common wharf to witness a vulgar grief?

As questions of this kind very naturally arose, Dorothy began to see clearly that her plan must be changed; and reflecting that the world is never so much pleased at being a spectator of sorrow, as when it can enjoy itself at the same time, she consulted with Frederick Ashley, who was just at the present moment her liberal agent in all affairs of a monetary description; and it was agreed between them, that a packet should be engaged for the purpose of taking out the emigrants to their vessel, while it remained at anchor a few miles from the town of M——; and thus, should the weather prove propitious, a very agreeable party might be collected together, who by the aid of a band of music, and a liberal provision of wines and other refreshments, might manage to enjoy themselves for a few hours very much to their hearts' content.

It is scarcely necessary to say that Dorothy Dalrymple was always happy—always *great* upon these occasions. The activity necessary for previous arrangements gave her health and spirits; having everything her own way gave her smiles and good humour; bringing together a

heterogeneous mass of people, all thrown out of their accustomed formalities, gave her infinite amusement; being herself the centre of all attraction, and the moving principle of all action, gave her unusual cheerfulness and enjoyment; and at the same time having a definite purpose upon which her heart was set, to carry out, gave her a secret source of satisfaction, which imparted something more than beauty to her countenance and manner.

Dorothy, in her humble steamer, was no pretended personification of the Enchantress of the Nile in her proud and splendid galley. The slightest approach to any such assumption would have been too evident in its burlesque to escape her keenest ridicule; but her secret feelings were in all probability not widely different, as she moved about from one group to another, saying bright and pleasant, but appropriate things to all; and keeping all in excellent humour, well pleased with themselves, and with everything around them, in consequence of the smooth and delicate flatteries which she mingled with all she said or did.

Happily for the party the day was most propitious. A cloudless sky over head, the waves which curled around the vessel unusually clear and blue, and the surrounding air without a breeze to ruffle it, just keen and sharp enough to impart a feeling of health and strength to every frame. Beyond which, the band of music was good, the tunes well chosen, joyous, and triumphant; so that if James Burton fancied and felt himself a hero for the time, he had at least as good ground upon which to build his belief as many who have gone before him under more distinguished names.

Many people thought it was a very beautiful sight to see, and the public papers did ample justice to the fact

—how the kind ladies kissed, and fondled, and caressed the children of the poor emigrants that day, some taking off an ear-ring to place in their hands as a parting present, and some dispensing bonbons—all giving something—anything that happened to be at hand. It was well Betsy was not present, or her faithful memory might have gone back to the previous offerings of the same party, and the bonfire which ensued.

Betsy Burton had decidedly declined being of the party, for many reasons which she did not deem it necessary to explain; but chiefly because there lay at the bottom of her heart a secret store of natural feeling which might have proved inconvenient in such a party, at such a time. And thus her hoarded gifts had been made in secret, her sisterly farewells uttered when none could hear but he for whom they were felt and spoken; and thus she now sat alone in her quiet chamber, while that gay party shouted their adieus, and laughed like joyous revellers to see that humble vessel hoist its sail with all its load of weeping emigrants, as slowly it moved onwards with the turning tide towards the wide, deep sea.

CHAPTER XIX.



HAD a painter, desirous of delineating a picture of female excellence in the most attractive form, sought out a study from the life, he could scarcely have found a subject better adapted for his purpose than Edith Egerton. Lovely in face and person, she was yet more remarkable for an evenness of temper, and generally well proportioned mind, which, while it displayed no quality in excess, left little to be wished for that was essential to the most agreeable and even charming character. It would be absurd to pretend that she was faultless, but her faults were of that description which seldom make their possessor less beloved; and as she was far from presuming upon her own talents or virtues, they had so much the stronger claim upon the admiration of all to whom they were known.

In person Edith was rather lovely than beautiful,—her features more English than Grecian,—her complexion brilliant, yet fair, with deep blue eyes, and luxuriant hair of a rich chestnut brown. In perfect harmony with such a face, and with a figure of no very slender proportions, was her gentle, soothing manner, whenever there was any person or any thing to be pitied, comforted, or loved;

while, on the other hand, a bright, animated expression of countenance, and an energy of voice and action somewhat unusual with a character so soft and kind, gave hopeful promise that in Edith Egerton might be found a friend of real help and sterling value.

With all the freshness and buoyant elasticity of youth and health, unchilled by disappointment, unclouded by anxiety or care, Edith moved about like one who never yet had trod on thorns, and yet her lot in life had been one which few would have envied, and fewer still would have regarded as exempt from trial and solicitude. Her family had been one in which disease and death had made many inroads, until a brother and sister were all who remained of her father's house. In all probability, the many losses they had sustained, and the many tears they had shed together, had been the means of rendering the two more closely attached to each other, and in some respects more independent of all the world beside.

It would seem strange, that having borne the tearing asunder of so many household ties, Edith should be still so light of heart; but such is not unfrequently the case with those who live to survive many losses: nor was it less consistent with the realities of every-day life, that she whose nearest connections had almost all sunk under constitutional maladies, should herself enjoy a more than usual amount of health as well as cheerfulness.

But while Edith rejoiced in this exuberant flow of energy and buoyant spirits—of strength and capability—which only ceased at that precise boundary beyond which it would have become unfeminine, there was one over whom she watched with the alternate fondness of a mother, and a child, who shared not in these enjoyments; and to whom, with all her care and all her tenderness, she strove

in vain to impart some portion of the healthy cheerfulness with which her own heart was always overflowing.

Henry Egerton, the brother who formed the chief object of her life, was perhaps, in all respects but one, as complete a contrast to his sister as could have been found. That one point of resemblance was an affectionate, trusting, and devoted heart. Afflicted from his birth with a lameness which greatly disfigured one limb, and seldom, even in his childhood, having known the sensation of being free from bodily pain or suffering of one kind or another, it was scarcely possible for the temper of the brother to remain either equal in itself, or easily controlled. So far from this, he suffered even more than from bodily pain, under a nervous irritability which it was at times impossible to soothe, and which it would have been difficult indeed to bear with in any close relationship, but for the redeeming properties of head as well as heart which he possessed in no ordinary degree.

Unfortunately for the sensitive, studious, sickly boy, his family had imagined, because he was born lame, and loved reading better than play, that he must be a genius; and thus, by their ill-judged flattery, and by the pains which were taken to stimulate his precocious talents, they had taught him to nurse within his bosom the germ of that poison-tree which was to overshadow his whole life.

But whether Henry Egerton was in his own character a genius or not, he certainly possessed two of the leading features of genius in no ordinary degree. He lived upon the opinion of others; and he had a prevailing impression upon his own mind that no one understood him. Thus, it was not always ill-temper, still less was it spite, which made him repel officious kindness, and even sometimes drive away the best intentioned friends. It was far more

frequently a natural impatience at not being able to find a single human being capable of feeling *with* him, as well as *for* him. Many, in fact, felt *for* him. The lame boy, with his thin lips, pale cheek, and fiery eye—his little white quivering hand, that scarcely had the steadiness or power to grasp his crutch—it was evident that he was an object almost universally felt for; but had he been felt *with*, there would have been few amongst his compassionate friends who would have made their pity manifest; for the pang it sometimes sent into his sad and troubled soul, was almost too much for childhood to sustain.

His crutch, too; instead of regarding it with complacency, or thankfulness, the lame boy learned to look upon it as the most hideous thing in the whole creation—the instrument of his humiliation—the monstrous thorn for ever piercing into his side. Oh! how often had he tried, when alone in his own little chamber, to walk, or at least to stand, unaided by his crutch; and how often had he fallen, prone, abject, and despairing, under the bitter disappointment of this unsuccessful trial. How often had he invented false pretences, too, to hide the shame, and to prevent the exposure of these experiments; for the enquiry of “Mother, did they laugh?” had too early become more familiar to him than his prayers.

To no other ear than his mother’s did Henry Egerton for a long time communicate his apprehensions or his sufferings; and when his mother was taken from him, the solitariness of his unshared feelings was pitiful indeed. Edith, though some years older than himself, was then too young to know the value of her own affection and sympathy; and how the poor boy struggled on at home, but worse than that—at school; what hardships and

imagined cruelties he endured, might, had his own description been taken as a warrant for their truth, have formed one of the most affecting records of human suffering ever presented to the world.

Time, however, rolls on with suffering as well as with enjoyment, though we are sometimes unwilling to believe that it does; and manhood came to the too sensitive youth, bringing with it a force of intellect, sharpened rather than invigorated by painful study. But along with this high gift, there were others of a more dangerous tendency in their influence upon the happiness and misery of ordinary life. Long suffering had found a voice through the medium of song, and the crushed heart that fancied it could find no sympathy in human fellowship, poured forth its sorrows to the winds and stars—the flowers—the streams—to all inanimate or unintelligent nature, and imagined it could hear responses full of tenderness and feeling, wherever there was beauty to attract the eye, or melody to charm the ear. Oh! wonderful accordance with the wants of human suffering—infinite harmony, without a note of discord—ever sounding in the waves, the waterfalls, the song of birds, the very silence whispering to be still, when night-fall closes around us. Oh! sympathy, that fails not though all else should fail, for ever lying at our feet, within the compass of our view—our grasp—our fond embrace—that grows with loneliness and want of fellowship. Oh! beautiful companionship of flowers, and waving woods, and fleecy clouds that wreath around the mountain tops, and valleys with their depth of shade, and gorgeous tints of sunset on the distant landscape: why is all this power of luxury and pomp of beauty sent into the soul, as if it had its native home, its birth-place, and its brotherhood there, and only went

abroad into the outer world, to come back with a fresher, richer harvest of delight?—why, but that the Creator has so willed it, that none of his creatures should be wholly desolate—none utterly companionless.

No sooner was this echo from the voice of universal nature heard by the young heart of him whom we have been describing, than he found an occupation and a purpose in his life. Hitherto he had done nothing but acquire—drink in—reflect—the thoughts of others, whether brilliant or profound; now he began to create, originate, remould, and to send forth his own thoughts, which he fondly imagined must call forth words from others. For this it was he listened, longed, and toiled, all unconsciously, however, to himself. He knew not the fire that was burning in his soul. He knew not the nature of the great want which made him feel so desolate, which goaded him on to action, and would not let him rest.

Under these circumstances it was that Henry Egerton forsook his sterner studies and became a poet,—forsook the healthy and invigorating pursuits of science and philosophy, and threw himself upon the mingled thorns and roses of that bed on which it is so much more easy to dream, than it is to sleep. Here it was that he nursed the ruling tendency of his nature until it grew into a passion. Here it was that he became the slave of fitful humours, led away by fancies often painful, always morbid, and deeply tainted by the hereditary diseases which preyed upon his bodily frame. Here it was that he only really lived by night, and slumbered and bemoaned himself by day; and here it was that, attended only by one companion, whose centre of existence was himself, who lived for him alone, and who, in her blind love and admiration, believed him to be of all human beings the most perfect

and the most highly gifted—here it was that he grew more and more diseased in mind, more selfish and requiring, just in proportion as he was shut out from healthy aliment, and locked within a narrow cell, to breathe the deleterious atmosphere of idleness and adulation.

Notwithstanding the extreme attractiveness of person and manners, to which Arnold Lee could not possibly be insensible in the sister, he would in all probability scarcely have sought her acquaintance again, at all events not for the mere pleasure of the interview, but that the brother had made a strange impression upon his fancy; and he could not satisfy his curiosity without seeking to know more of one who appeared to be labouring under many painful disadvantages, yet whose mind and disposition seemed both to be of a nature to claim fellowship with everything intelligent, noble, generous, and kind.

For this purpose Arnold took advantage of their relative circumstances, and the interest naturally excited by the peril and escape of the sister, to make an early call upon the Egertons,—too early it appeared for the habits of the brother; for when Edith entered the room where Arnold waited, she told him that it wanted yet an hour to the usual time of her brother's leaving his room. Arnold of course proposed, on hearing this, to call again at a later hour on some other occasion; but with a frankness which seemed at once to claim his services as those of a friend, Edith begged him to remain, though but a few moments, as she was in a state of great perplexity, and knew not whom to consult without the risk of exposing family affairs.

Arnold felt bound in politeness, if not also in common kindness, to remain; but he assured the lady, at the same time, of his fears that he should not be able to render her any important service.

"I am not going to trouble you for any further service than your advice," said Miss Egerton, "nor would I presume to ask for that, but that we are almost friendless, and that my perplexities are of a kind which I cannot communicate to my brother, although he is himself unconsciously the root and cause of all."

"He is ill," observed Arnold.

"He has been as ill as you find him now ever since I can remember noticing such things. It is not that which distresses me, for I have been so long accustomed to see him suffering and weak, that I scarcely expect him to be otherwise."

"Perhaps your anxiety is connected with your recent loss?" said Arnold.

"Ah! that was a heavy loss to me," said Miss Egerton; "the more so that Henry must never know it."

"If I am to be your adviser," said Arnold, smiling, "I am afraid I shall run counter to what appears to be your habitual mode of acting."

"How so?" asked the lady.

"I am afraid I shall advise you, in the first instance, to be perfectly open with your brother."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Edith. "You do not know my brother, nor the nature of the anxieties I alluded to."

"Certainly not; and I am consequently unfit to be your adviser."

"But you shall know them in another moment, only I fancied I heard Henry moving in the room above. Hush! I think all is quiet again. And now for my story. You see what a fine sensitive creature my brother is—with a mind so full of knowledge, and so beautifully toned,—a poet too,—everything you can imagine that is exquisite and delightful, and yet hopelessly an invalid, and very

poor. Only think of Henry poor! And yet we have no right to be living in this house, ordinary and humble as it is; but he does not know that, and if I can prevent it, he never shall."

"I shall be a bad adviser for you," said Arnold, with an ominous shake of the head.

"We were left orphans together," continued the lady, and have known little of any companionship beyond what we find in each other. A very limited income, and a small patrimonial estate in Scotland, were all the worldly possessions we ever had to calculate upon. This income has hitherto proved insufficient for my brother's wants, I ought to say his necessities, for he actually *needs* what would be superfluous for others. A short time ago it occurred to us both that we might as well dispose of this little estate, and enjoy what benefit we could from the proceeds of the sale. The business altogether cost us a great deal of trouble and perplexity, and at last I made a journey to the spot myself, determined not to return until I had seen the transfer of the property into other hands completed, and had secured the money in my own. Not to weary you with more of these details, I conceived the womanly project of being the bearer of my own wealth, for the purpose of making him happy for a moment by the sight of that and me together. You know what followed; and how utterly hopeless now is the idea of ever recovering what I lost. It was to be sure no great amount of wealth after all; but it would have enabled me to procure a world of pleasure for my brother."

"But your brother," observed Arnold, "is surely not a child, that he should murmur against what is inevitable. I should rather imagine him to be one who would meet his privations with a manly spirit, and willingly adapt

himself to circumstances, even when they stinted the measure of his personal enjoyments."

Miss Egerton clasped her hands and looked upwards, exclaiming, "How little do you know my poor brother! Why, it is the sole object of my life to keep him up, and make him feel on good terms with himself, and thus with all the world. He must on no account be allowed to sink, or to feel that he is poor."

"Ah! Miss Egerton," said Arnold, "if I could serve you here, if I had any skill in making poverty feel like riches, and never be found out to be the thing it really is, I should at this moment be the most sought after of all human beings."

"And yet," said Edith, "it does not seem to me so very difficult. I have done this for Henry myself, and he has not had the slightest suspicion that I was concealing the truth."

"Or *acting* a lie," said Arnold.

The lady looked astonished; but it was only as a person listens to an unknown tongue, spoken with vehemence; she did not understand the meaning of his words, and still less their application to her own self-devotion, which she had been accustomed to regard as the most religious duty of her life.

"I have many plans," she went on to say in the same manner in which people speak of their meritorious actions, "for keeping up the tone of my brother's mind, and I should have the most exquisite enjoyment in the means by which I thus minister to his happiness, were not my plans so many of them expensive ones. For instance, I manage, unknown to him, to get his poems printed; and what is more, I sometimes manage to get them *praised*. Ah! that is worth everything, and repays me for all. If

you could once behold those brilliant eyes of his glancing over the pages of a flattering review, you would never forget the spectacle of that intense emotion, however long you might live!"

"Indeed, Miss Egerton," said Arnold, very gravely, "I do not think I should."

"But I have not told you all," continued Edith. "I have a better, deeper secret than that. I answer him myself in some of the papers, taking up the spirit of his verses, though in a very inferior style, and writing as if I was some unknown lady, whose heart was touched by his sentiments, and whose mind reflected the forms and pictures and imaginations of his own. If he is gay, the unknown lady rejoices, and congratulates him; if he is sad, she sympathises; and thus their souls converse together through the language of poetry."

"And he is entirely ignorant," asked Arnold, "of your share in these transactions?"

"Entirely," said the lady, as if she had spoken of a circumstance to be congratulated upon.

Arnold uttered an involuntary exclamation, which his companion interpreted as a tribute of applause to her amiable ingenuity, as well as to the success of her admirable plans for making her brother happy.

"If you could know what enjoyment I have," said she, "what exquisite enjoyment, while I minister to his gratification in this way, what pains I take, and yet how richly I am repaid, I am sure you would envy me the place I am filling."

"And yet," said Arnold, "that place has its troubles and perplexities, or I should not have been called upon as an adviser. May I ask again in what respect it is possible for me to be useful either to you or to your

brother? My time is not my own, Miss Egerton, and I am a very direct kind of person. If there is anything I can really do for your brother, pray tell me. If not, I believe I must bid you good morning."

"Ah, true," replied Miss Egerton, without the slightest symptom of chagrin, "I have wearied you with my personal affairs. You were so kind to me on that awful night, so much like a second brother, that I have been betrayed into a foolish forgetfulness that we are still strangers, or at best the casual acquaintances of a moment of accidental interest. Pardon me this impertinent intrusion. I ought to have told you in few words, that all I wanted was to know by what means we could maintain possession of this house, seeing we are not able now to pay so high a rent?"

"A very puzzling question," replied Arnold; "and one which, if I could answer satisfactorily, would place me, as I said before, in the foremost rank of popular men; for what does the world want half so much as to know how to live in handsome houses without the means of paying for them."

Miss Egerton again looked entirely at a loss for the meaning of Arnold's words. It was evident they were conversing together in two distinct languages, and that the lady understood but one. In this manner persons sometimes feel when communicating with those whose habits of life, and modes of thinking, are essentially different from their own. Their actual words on such occasions may be the same, but the ideas attached to those words, and the associations which they call forth, are so entirely those of far separated regions of existence, that the spirit of the language in which the parties converse is nothing better than a total blank.

But it was not merely that Arnold felt annoyed at this demand made upon sympathies which he could not render. He felt absolutely distressed and pained at the idea that any one so naturally amiable as Miss Egerton appeared to be, should be wasting her kind feelings and good purposes by placing them upon so false a foundation, that it was impossible they should ever tend to any real good.

Under these painful regrets, and without being able to offer any further help than the old threadbare promise of bearing her circumstances in mind if he should hear of anything, or if anything should occur to him as likely to be useful; and after waiting in vain for the purpose of improving his acquaintance with the brother, Arnold took leave of Miss Egerton, with a full determination in his own mind, that he would never again place himself in the hopeless position of being *her* adviser.

From this fruitless and unsatisfactory interview, Arnold Lee hastened to the scene of his daily occupations, and soon worked off the transient annoyance he had sustained, by increased assiduity in the performance of his accustomed labours; so that the trifled moments of the morning should not make any material difference in the actual amount of work completed before nightfall.

It was, consequently, with a healthy glow upon his cheek, with animated eye, and quickly throbbing pulse, that Arnold repaired, at the close of the day, to his humble lodging at the village inn, where, at the very best, a little parlour, with smoky walls and sanded floor, was the highest luxury he could command in the way of personal accommodation. As not unfrequently happens, however, in way-side houses of this description, the viands were in themselves far better than the manner in which they were served; and so little superior as a place of accommodation

was his solitary parlour, to the public room were all stray comers assembled without distinction, that Arnold on some occasions preferred the latter, for the sake of the variety and amusement which it afforded. Here then it was that he made himself acquainted with some of those causes of popular excitement which at this time agitated the working classes of the country; and here it was that he was able for a while to forget those secret cares which had too much power to destroy his own peace of mind.

Fruitless, and vain, and destructive to his energies, as these might have been if yielded to or cherished, Arnold was not more determined in his outward avocations to overcome all tendency to indolence or neglect; than he was, in his silent and solitary musings, to master the weakness of his soul, and to drive from his thoughts the absorbing theme which had occupied them too long. That this determination, and the firmness with which it was pursued, cost him many a painful struggle, may be readily supposed; and but for the invigorating energy derived from strong bodily labour, and the deep but healthy sleep which it procured, he would never have been able to combat with his enemy to any efficient purpose.

On the night described, Arnold felt it a welcome relaxation, after the false sentiment and sickly sensibility which he had been made acquainted with in the morning, to plunge, with unusual sociability, into the domestic affairs of his hostess at the inn; and he was the more inclined to occupy a place in her chimney corner, on hearing her intelligence of a number of "hands," lately thrown out of work, being likely to assemble there that night, for the purpose of discussing their future plans and modes of proceeding.

Arnold had observed a great number of lounging, idle,

dissipated looking men, of this description, hanging about the neighbourhood all day; and as he missed his companion, Morton, from his place at the embankment, he had no one of whom to ask the meaning of such an unsettled state of things.

As the evening drew on, and these strange-looking guests began to assemble, many of them demanding *more* of what they had already had in quantities too liberal, Arnold experienced sundry misgivings as to how he should like to be seen in their society; but his curiosity overcoming all other sensations, he drew himself up more closely into an angle made by the projecting sides of the chimney, and in the deep shadow of this recess, adjusted his person so that he could see and hear what was going on without being likely to be seen himself.

Amongst the motley group by which he was surrounded, Arnold was not long in discovering his friend Morton; and he was not a little amused to see how the moody misanthrope, and the professed despiser of the whole human race, could, when he had a sufficient end to serve by it, assume the bearing of a man of urbanity and cordial feeling.

Such was Morton in the commencement of that evening's intercourse with a few discontented spirits like his own; but before the evening closed, what was he not? The champion of the rights of suffering humanity wherever it was to be found, amongst the low places of the earth,—the bitter and malignant enemy of wealth, and rank, and luxury, wherever these also were to be found. It would have been difficult to say on which of these themes Morton was most eloquent, only that the latter chimed in more harmoniously with his accustomed mode of thinking.

It was amusing, too, to Arnold, to see the profound attention and deep reverence with which Morton was for

some time listened to by his eager audience. But this kind of attention has its limit; and where the amusement of the occasion consists, as in this instance, in drinking as well as listening, there comes a time when each member of the party is more anxious to speak than to hear. Thus Morton was not without his rivals on the tribune, and although the early impression made by his eloquence had been flattering in the extreme, he was doomed to a kind of mortification which has fallen upon many more distinguished orators—that of finding his audience, when their turn came to give utterance to their feelings, infinitely more pleased with their own speeches than with his.

The hostess of the little inn, while deeply interested in what was going on amongst her guests, and holding herself in readiness to attend their slightest call, had seated herself in the quiet corner beside Arnold, without exchanging with him any remark; so deeply were both absorbed in the scene which was going on before their eyes; when suddenly the woman starting up from her seat, exclaimed, “Why, dear me, there’s a letter come for you, with ‘immediate’ upon the back of it—two letters, I believe. I’ll fetch them in a minute.”

“No, no,” said Arnold, rising. “Don’t bring them here. Give me a light, and show me where they are.”

The woman went before him into the little parlour, and there upon the table lay two letters. One of them was from his mother, and it was sealed with black.

CHAPTER XX.



ON the day of the solemn funeral at Hatherstone, when listening to the reading of her grandfather's will, Kate Staunton had been as much overwhelmed with gratitude for the bequest of a thousand pounds, as if it had been a mine of inexhaustible wealth. It was, in fact, just so much more than she had expected. According to Michael Staunton's opinion of her conduct, whether that opinion was right or wrong, it was just so much more than she deserved; and therefore she was deeply affected by the kindness and consideration which could thus remember her necessities, rather than her faults, and especially her recent disobedience.

Like her cousin Arnold, Kate felt for a while as if a thousand pounds would place her at once in circumstances of independence, if not of actual affluence; and she also soon began to plan how to give out of her abundance—not by any means omitting the bestowment of her generosity in the same quarter; and although delicacy forbade that any great amount should either be offered or received, there were not wanting many means of adding to Arthur Hamilton's enjoyments, without involving any feeling on his part of having incurred an obligation. Situated, as he was, in lodgings, it was not difficult to arrange that

many little additions to his comfort, and many embellishments to his library, as well as to his table, should be introduced into his apartments, through the people of the house whose rooms he occupied; and as he felt no doubt about the source from whence the kindness emanated, it occasioned no surprise, and but little remark, when he found himself surrounded by a greater amount of household comforts than he had recently been the master of.

And yet in his heart Arthur Hamilton found it impossible to forgive Kate Staunton for what he still regarded either as some blind folly, or blinder obstinacy on her part, in the loss of the Hatherstone property. So nearly as it had been within her grasp, too; for she had told him all the surprise which her grandfather's conversation with her had occasioned, and the hopes which had arisen out of it for him, even more than for herself. All this had been faithfully transmitted to her lover, and all had been received by him with unutterable delight.

With all his early and his ardent love, it was impossible but that Arthur Hamilton must have sometimes felt that Kate Staunton was not quite the girl to make that figure in society which he would desire for his wife; and the more popular he himself became, and the more he felt or fancied of the power of choosing almost where he would, the more reluctantly his tongue confessed his engagement; until at last there might have been detected in his tone something like a faint apology for what he called the "fancy of his boyhood." No sooner, however, did the certain prospect of Hatherstone dawn upon him as the dowry of his wife, than Kate Staunton rose again high in his hemisphere of thought, the queen of all. It was then that Kate became at once the cleverest girl he ever met with—her voice in speaking the sweetest, her words the

most appropriate and correct, her mind the most enlightened, her heart the most generous and noble. He could almost have written verses to her—his passion rose to such a height.

How then was the picture marred—the charm dispelled, when those fatal tidings came that Hatherstone was lost, and that Kate alone remained! Yet he did not reproach her. Frank, out-spoken, and impetuous as he was, he restrained himself here. Perhaps he felt too much to speak; and thus the poison rankled in his heart, and Kate had no opportunity of explaining how it was for *him* that she had sacrificed the golden prospect.

Not that Kate had at the time the least intention of keeping from her lover any portion of what had transpired. Like himself, she was too frank and too confiding for that; but before she could manage to get her story told, he had chilled and disappointed her too severely by the manner in which he had replied to the intelligence of the great leading fact—the closing of all her prospects with regard to Hatherstone. It was precisely that point upon which she felt that she deserved her lover's deepest, kindest sympathy; and failing to obtain it unasked for, she grew proud, and would not explain what was the exact nature of those added claims upon his esteem and affection, which it seemed so easy for him to overlook. Thus, for the first time, a certain degree of coldness and reserve stole in to damp the pleasure of their intercourse, not sufficiently marked on either side to call for remonstrance or explanation, and therefore the more likely to be lasting, and destructive to their mutual confidence.

The grand medicine for woman's heart, when suffering under feelings of this nature—feelings which cannot, perhaps *ought* not to be disclosed,—is that her head and

hands should have sufficient occupation; and never in her life had Kate Staunton been less favourably situated in this respect than at the present time. The old hall at Hatherstone had become almost as much like a home for the dead as the living. The whole establishment had been broken up, with the exception of such members of it as were barely sufficient to keep the place in a state of tolerable security and order, and of these the director and principal was Thomas, whose faithful step might be heard late and early, tracing his solitary rounds, testing the efficiency of bolts and bars, and leaving no nook or corner unexplored in which it was possible that a depredator could be concealed. Beyond this, it was evident from his general manner of conducting the external affairs of Hatherstone that his object was to draw them within narrower compass; and although no sale of the property was talked of, nor any different appropriation hinted at near home, there were rumours in the town of M—— that a large portion of the mansion, stable, and grounds were advertised to be let for a term of years not exceeding five.

Although it was naturally a subject of frequent surmise and curiosity with Kate Staunton, as to what were the ultimate views of Margaret, and her adviser the solicitor, with regard to her grandfather's affairs, yet, finding no disposition in either of these parties to be at all communicative on this point, she soon ceased, as a point of delicacy, to make it the subject of any kind of allusion in her own conversation.

The general conduct and bearing of Margaret corresponded exactly with that of her servants in the arrangement made within the house. For her own occupation she selected a few small apartments in a very ancient part of

the mansion, where a comfortable residence might be maintained entirely distinct from the great body of the house. Had a taste for the romantic been any part of Margaret's character, it might well have been supposed to influence her selection, for there was a beautifully picturesque effect, combined with a strange mystery and loneliness, in the range of low chambers, winding passages, and ivy-wreathed windows, amongst which she had made her home.

Nor was it necessary, in entering this part of the building, to pass through the doorway and spacious hall which communicated with the more important and imposing portion of the house. But twice every day, morning and evening, did Margaret descend into the old, familiar rooms to see that everything was in order—to draw up, and to let down blinds, and to open windows on fresh sunny mornings, so that the gentle winds might blow over the old furniture, and amongst the heavy curtains that, used to look so warm. It was a solemn business to her, and seldom performed without a slight shake of the head, and a passing sigh as she looked towards the vacant chair in which the lord of the mansion had been accustomed to rest. It was solemn to her for many reasons, but chiefly because it always reminded her of the stillness and solitude of the grave, and of the certainty of death. Not that such thoughts brought terror with them, still less pain, to a mind so serious and devout as hers. She rather loved to linger in these voiceless rooms, and yield to silent meditation upon all the subjects of deep interest which their solitude recalled—some brought back by the power of strong contrast, others by resemblance, but all more or less connected with ideas of death and of eternity.

The few servants in the hall knew well that their assistance was not needed here, their presence not desired, and as the quiet tread of their mistress was heard along the stairs, they understood her so well as rather to shun than meet her on that faithful errand.

In her own apartments it was different. Here Margaret transacted business as before—here she saw and consulted with her servants—her poor, more limited in their allowance, though not less kindly received than heretofore; and here too she pursued whatever useful or busy occupation she could find to do, more especially her extensive manufactory of clothing for the destitute and needy, which it seemed as if the old chests and wardrobes of Hatherstone might be likely to supply for a period beyond the lives of its present occupants.

In this occupation Margaret found unceasing amusement and delight, and in cultivating and tending her favourite flowers. Those who knew her fondness for a flower-garden would have easily understood her preference for this part of the mansion, for her favourite sitting-room opened immediately upon a terrace, from which a flight of steps led down into the very bosom of her gorgeous flower-beds, where in the centre a little fountain sent up all day its lulling waters. Over this secluded spot no boisterous wind could ever blow, so entirely was it protected by the massive building on one side, and by a high garden-wall on another, while a thick shrubbery of evergreens ran round it on the remaining two.

But the most picturesque portion of this scene was where the massive steps, with richly carved stone-work on either side, half shrouded in thick ivy, were seen ascending by two short flights up to the terrace. Here heavier masses of ivy mixed with roses and clematis, half

concealed the glass-door of Margaret's sitting-room, where she could sit on chilly days, and yet enjoy the picture of her garden spread before her as distinctly as if she was actually amongst its sweets and blooms.

Perhaps it never once entered into the imagination of Margaret to fancy that while she could gaze upon her flowers, the flowers through the same glass-door could gaze upon her. A mind more imaginative than hers might have been led from this conceit to think that other observers besides the flowers might, if they would, indulge their curiosity by gazing in upon her peaceful life; in short, that any one tracing the path along the terrace, would find themselves, by a sudden turn in the wall, brought immediately in front of her door, where, although the ivy would in all probability conceal them, they would be able to command a distinct view of the interior of her sitting-room.

So uneventful, however, had been the life of this peaceful and humble-minded woman, so unaspiring her own efforts and hopes, and, with the exception of one bitter trial—one great calamity, whose dark shadow still in some measure cast a gloom upon her path—with this exception, so entirely free had been her experience from any of those sudden and alarming shocks which sometimes in an instant change the whole current of a life, that scarcely could a human being have been found whose days and nights were passed with a more entire absence of fear, not arising so much from absolute courage, as an abiding sense of security under the protection and care of a superintending Providence.

Thus Margaret would not unfrequently go out upon the terrace-walk alone in the dim twilight hour, and even later in the night when the moon was shining, and the dew

lay still upon the untrodden grass, when nothing could be heard but the browsing cattle behind the garden-wall, as they cropped the short rich clover; not even the clank of the watch-dog's chain—only that tinkling fountain never still, with its agitated bosom glittering in the moonlight, and reflecting back her rays of beauty which its bubbling waters melted into a thousand stars.

It could not but be evident to Kate Staunton, that while so kindly treated, and still beloved by Margaret, she was not needed here—that she had, in fact, no definite and useful place to fill. It was true she could read, and pursue her favourite studies at Hatherstone. No place in the world was better adapted for such pursuits. She might dream, too, strange day-dreams, and build castles without bound, or limit, or foundation; but what would be the result of weeks and months so spent, or what their effect upon herself?

“No, no,” said Kate, to herself one day, as she rose from a rustic seat in the flower-garden, “this will never do for me. I must find other occupation than listening to that fountain. I fancy one must either have done or suffered a great deal, before one can be brought into a state to yield to this luxuriant repose without injury.”

Besides her thirst for action, and her desire to fill a place in the world, and to be of use to somebody, Kate had a prudent regard to the management of her own property; for while on the one hand, nothing would have induced her to remain with Margaret except on terms of honourable independence, on the other, she was unable to reconcile to her own mind the alternative of expending her grandfather's bequest upon her own idleness and self-indulgence. To keep this untouched for any future need

was the first wish of her heart; and as she had incurred the displeasure of her lover for the loss of wealth, over which but for him she might now have had undisputed right, she was determined by every effort in her power to make up for the want of better fortune, by taking care of what she had. Such indeed was the amount of feeling with which she regarded the loss of Hatherstone to him, and the conscious diminution of her own power to contribute to his favourite indulgences, that for the first time in her life she grew almost avaricious, so as even on one occasion to be slightly reproved by Margaret, and seriously warned against the encouragement of a love of money.

It was a sharp and cutting reproof, as it fell upon the ear of poor Kate that day. At least it felt so, although mildly uttered, to one painfully conscious how little it was deserved; and all unaccustomed as she was to any outward display of excessive tenderness, the glistening tears might have been detected as they started to her eyes, to be sent back with a sudden effort and shut again within her aching heart.

Had Margaret been conscious of the pain she was inflicting, sad indeed would have been her sorrow and regret; more especially had she entertained the least idea that she was wounding a young spirit already more than sufficiently tried. But happy in her ignorance, the occasion passed over; and while she stooped again amongst her flowers, and busied herself with her endless occupation, her companion took the opportunity of withdrawing to think and feel alone, lest any uncontrollable weakness—any faltering of the voice, or unaccustomed tone, should draw upon her more attention than she felt at that moment strong enough to bear.

The result of this, and many previous meditations which Kate had held in her own chamber, was a more fixed determination to leave the Hall, and a more definite plan with regard to herself and the disposal of her talents and her time. Had the former been communicated without the latter, Margaret would never have been brought to consent, and might perhaps have drawn painful conclusions from a wish to leave her without any apparently sufficient cause. But when the necessity and prospect of occupation was laid before her as a reason, she, who herself had led so active and useful a life, and who was so great an advocate for industry in others, was without difficulty convinced that Hatherstone afforded no scope just then for the operations of more than one able person in its internal arrangements.

It was curious to hear how this simple-minded woman still cast about for something for Kate to do, in the hope that a plea might be found for keeping her. She first thought of her poor, but already she had supplied so many families with clothing, that some, as she observed, "had grown idle themselves." She thought of her flowers, but she did not quite like to offer the privilege of touching them to any other hand than her own, however dear. She thought of her bees—of her fruit—of her autumn preserves; but for all these she was more than competent herself, even during the season when the most business was required. So Margaret looked grievously at a loss, not knowing what more to say, until Kate, amused at her amiable dilemma, kissed her, and told her in a laughing, good-humoured manner, that she knew from the first it would be in vain, unless Margaret chose to take lodgers into the house, and employ her to wait upon them.

Little did Kate Staunton think what a tender chord she was touching when she spoke of lodgers. It was all too true that Hatherstone Hall was advertised to be let; and the anticipation of this event was the darkest cloud which hung at present over Margaret's future lot. For once, and once only, she spoke freely on the subject to Kate—freely, and in her own opinion very *wrongly*; for what right had she to murmur, or to set herself against *his* will? It was all right, she said—there could be no manner of doubt but it was all perfectly right; and she had everything she wanted in the world—nay, more a hundredfold—she had her rooms all chosen by herself after her heart's desire—her garden—everything; and yet if there *should* come strange people into the house—and nobody knew what might come when once it was in the papers to let—if people with strange ways *should* come, and the place *should* be all turned upside down——!"

At this climax, Margaret yielded to a sudden burst of tears, more violent than Kate had ever seen her shed, and she could not but wonder at the fortitude which enabled her stand without apparent emotion by the side of her husband's grave, when she was still liable to be overcome by an occasion so trifling in comparison as the present. But so it is with a vulgar—a common—an inferior grief. We bring no great effort to the conflict which it requires, nor deem its outward manifestation too sacred for the eyes of ordinary observers.

It was scarcely a time for introducing any subject of painful interest, and yet Kate Staunton felt that her determination must not only be frankly told, but acted upon without hesitation or delay. There was a dreamy kind of luxurious indolence in her present situation, which is always too tempting to the pensive or sorrowful;

and although Kate was naturally very far from being one of this class, she now experienced, for the first time in her life, the danger of being overcome by the insidious encroachments of a secret and incommunicable grief.

"After all," said Margaret, in the course of this interview; and when her young companion had brought forward many reasons for making the change which she contemplated, "I cannot quite see the necessity for your leaving me, and I think the shelter of a safe and quiet home is a great thing for a young woman without parents or natural protectors."

"It is indeed a great thing," replied Kate—"too great—too good a thing for me to trust myself with under present circumstances. I should soon become unfitted for the trials and the duties of life, if I lived here with nobody but you, who are too kind to me by half."

"You must forgive me," said Margaret again, "if I cannot quite understand you. I have heard *unkindness* complained of often enough; but to complain of kindness, and to wish to get away from it, is altogether a new thing to me."

"But it is not new to you," said Kate, "that youth has its sorrows, as well as riper years."

Margaret looked with sudden interest, and with an expression of deep feeling into the face of her companion, but she did not speak.

"It is not new to you either," Kate went on to say, "that occupation—necessary and incessant occupation—even hard work, is an excellent medicine for one whose mind is ill at ease."

"It is not," replied Margaret.

"You have tried it yourself?"

"Yes, but I was under heavy grief then."

"And may not others have heavy griefs?"

"Surely not you, my child."

"Do not ask me just now, how deep, or how heavy. Perhaps I cannot tell myself—perhaps I have not yet fathomed the deep waters, nor learned what rocks and quicksands lie before me."

"Poor child!" said Margaret, with a sigh so deep that it conveyed all the meaning which she could not utter.

"You must not pity me," said Kate. "I cannot bear it. You must strengthen and support me, if you would do me good."

"Perhaps you had better go," said Margaret, with a feeling more really kind than if she had urged her in the most affectionate terms to stay.

"Perhaps you had better go," she repeated, "but remember, this place is always your home—your natural—*rightful* home," she was about to say, but checked herself suddenly. "You must come back to me often, as if I was your mother, and tell me all things that trouble you, or please you—tell me everything, in short; for it is a duty laid upon me, that I do not lose you from my sight, even if it had not been the first wish of my heart to keep you near me."

"Indeed you never shall," said Kate. "And so now this sad affair is settled between us; and we will have no weeping—no regrets—no looking back, or hesitating."

"For that I can answer," said Margaret, "but not for the regrets, nor yet the weeping; I shall so miss you when you are gone. I will not say that I shall feel lonely or forsaken, for that I never do while God is with me. But one cannot read always, and thinking tires when there is no one to think for but oneself."

"But you have your flowers."

"Yes, in their season."

"And all your neighbours, and the servants, to think for, and Thomas."

"Yes, and they are all good to me, and are for the most part orderly and reputable, as I could desire them to be."

"And then there is your aged mother. Ah! now I think of it, would it not be an excellent plan to have her come and live with you here?"

Margaret shook her head discouragingly, as she said, "I have thought of that, and even spoken of it to my mother; but she clings to the old place, dreary as it is; and I much question whether she would be able to make herself at home here."

It was therefore finally decided that Margaret should dwell alone, and that Kate should prepare herself for taking at least a temporary leave of Hatherstone, having promised, with the utmost willingness and cordiality, to consider the old family mansion as her home.

The plans upon which Kate Staunton was, not rashly but deliberately, acting, were these: she had received an excellent education of the most popular and approved description, having shared in the benefits conferred by all the masters who attended the Ashley family for the education of her cousins. Beyond this, she had pursued her own studies with the greater assiduity, from the circumstance of enjoying but few inducements to share in the amusements or the society of other members of the household. Thus the years spent under this roof had been years of actual learning, and hard study, to her whose clear mind was more than commonly adapted for deriving benefit from such pursuits. Indeed, so highly were her mental qualifications esteemed by all who knew

her, that even the Ashleys themselves paid the most flattering tribute they were capable of paying to her superiority in this respect.

We have already stated that Mrs. Ashley and her daughters had a promising scheme of their own for keeping themselves still afloat in society, without incurring any further personal degradation than that of being the originators and conductors of a first-rate boarding-school for young ladies.

This they found no difficulty in establishing, even in the vicinity of a large town where the mercantile connections of the family, and their recent failure, must have been well known. Yet so elegant and so imposing was this establishment in all its ramifications, and so magnificent was said to be the style in which its interior arrangements were conducted, that no doubt remained upon the public mind as to Mrs. Ashley's fitness, in every respect, for discharging the responsible duties which she pledged herself to fulfil.

It was in connection with the conduct of this establishment, that Kate Staunton had received from her oldest cousin a letter of such unwonted courtesy and smoothness, that she found it necessary to look more than once at the signature, before feeling fully assured that it was an authentic document.

The purport of this letter was a proposal to Kate to go and be their junior teacher, on those pleasant terms of receiving benefit herself from the various masters, as ample remuneration for her services in the school. This plan was alluded to in the letter as if it had been the kindest and most liberal thing in the world; and a tender little confiding note was enclosed from Mrs. Ashley, describing the difficulty her daughters felt in associating themselves

with a stranger, and how much it was the desire of all that Kate should be admitted on terms of perfect equality with themselves, and thus help to form a little family of love, while adding another link to the chain by which her own dear girls were already so closely bound around her heart.

It was impossible for Kate to help laughing over this precious communication, so thin was the disguise which the writers had thrown over their own prudential plans; and she laughed the more, that she was now entirely independent of the family, and knew them too well to be easily entangled in any of those complicated webs which they were perpetually weaving.

With a pleasant feeling of escape, as well as freedom, Kate Staunton went on pursuing her own course, after returning a very civil answer to her aunt's proposal; at the same time that she expressed her thanks for the offer, stating her own preference for a situation in which the remuneration would be of a more tangible, and, to her, more useful description.



CHAPTER XXI.

MISS DALRYMPLE had always appeared to derive the highest satisfaction from great and stirring occasions, and from scenes of interest in which she was the principal actor. Hitherto these occasions had all been inferior to that great event of woman's life, in which, so far as fiction is concerned, she generally figures as a heroine for the last time; and it might be supposed that if ever the hour should come for Dorothy herself to stand before the altar, and to speak "the fitting vow," she would prepare, with all the pomp of circumstance which it was possible for her to command, for producing on the occasion a more striking and brilliant effect than ever was produced before.

It so happened, however, that exactly the opposite of this was Dorothy's choice. Indeed, so entirely undisturbed were her appearance and manner by any extraordinary emotion; so much was she occupied in her accustomed pursuits; so little was apparent of preparation of any kind whatever, that no sooner was the near approach of the great event communicated to the members of the household from other sources, than even Betsy Burton herself began to exclaim, as she hurried about ut

from room to room, busy without anything to do—even this devoted and determined spinster might have been heard exclaiming to herself, that if people must be married at all, it was surely “worth while putting a good face upon the matter, and doing it respectably and decently.”

There are persons who know what it is to have a strong presentiment that the very thing they are about to do, the thing which they are preparing for, and which, in reality, they have brought upon themselves, never will take place. There are condemned criminals on the eve of execution, who, although all human help has failed, believe that some providential or even some miraculous intervention will still prevent on the morrow the fulfilment of their destiny; and there are others who make ready for the voluntary utterance of a sentence scarcely less dreadful to themselves in the consequences it entails, with a secret confidence that the hour in which they are to pronounce their own doom will never come.

It was with a vague conviction of this kind that Dorothy Dalrymple went on from day to day. The marriage which alone she had ever allowed herself to contemplate, was a mere partnership in the possession of wealth and luxury, and a high and sure position in society, with all the distinction and *eclat* which that position was likely to command; and such a marriage was unquestionably near at hand. But as the hour drew nigh, and it was already coming—coming—like an avalanche just loosening from its hold; as this hour drew nigh, there arose before her mental vision quite another kind of marriage, or rather the picture of a marriage, in which the groundwork of the scene was strewn with images of death—dead hopes, and poisoned sensibilities, and blighted feelings—all crushed and tortured ere they died.

Nor was this picture all. That fantastic girl had always been a great adept in the creation of pictures; hence, in all probability, arose her longing to paint them. She could hear sounds, too, which constituted no part of the noisy world around her, but were more like the music of a distant sphere, which found its echo, its faint imperfect echo, in this; and late one night, as she sat musing and unoccupied beside her solitary fire, there seemed by degrees to fall upon her dreamy senses something like the felling of wood in a Canadian forest,—certainly no soft or melodious sound in itself; but with it came a sense of stillness in the clear thin air, bright sunshine overhead, and spotless snow beneath; and such a glorious freedom! such a distance, too, from the dull, worn-out world; and then at nightfall, such repose, such gathering in beside the glowing fire, such welcome, such security—no “whispering tongue” to “poison truth,”—no bitterness—no slander; but perfect trust, and heart-warm, frank, inspiring communion of soul with soul. Love too was there, in that ideal picture, “fluttering his rosy pinions” over the scene. There was a kind, fond hand to press—a manly arm to lean upon—a noble heart, above all guile, to pour each thought and feeling into, with no fear of the most worthless being spurned—the most intense or elevated being misinterpreted.

Ah! there lay the grand charm of this ideal picture—to be *perfectly understood*,—to have the very soul looked into and appreciated,—not estimated above its value, nor yet below. To speak—to think aloud—nay, even to look that spiritual language which scarcely needs the medium of words in its communication with a sympathising nature. But, above all, to find all this, to enjoy and to possess it, in one who could not sink, nor let sink any whom he loved

—whose nature was as honourable as his love was fond and true. And to be ever with him, looking up to him, and made better by his influence and affection; both so blended, that to grow unworthy would be almost impossible.

The dreamer was startled out of her long musing over this picture by a sound behind her—a slight movement, at which she looked round and beheld her bridal bonnet sliding from the table to the ground. Dorothy's first impulse was to set her foot upon it, but she decided more wisely to place it again upon the table without injury, and then to trim her candle, and retire to rest.

Whether her retirement was to sleep, or merely to think, might have been a subject of anxious enquiry with any one deeply interested in her welfare; and Betsy Burton was not slow to draw her own conclusions from the altered appearance of her young mistress, who seemed to be fast losing every tint of bloom, and with it every portion of beauty she had once possessed, with the exception of those large and expressive eyes, whose natural brilliance not even want of sleep could quench.

"We shall have but a dull wedding," said old Bridget to Betsy, on the morning of the appointed day—"the master out, and all!"

"As to the master," responded Betsy, "I never saw that he had much to do with the cheerfulness of this house, whatever he may with others. We shall get through the business as well without *him*, at any rate."

"There's the giving away," observed Bridget, in a tone expressive of doubt how that great duty was to be performed without parental aid; but Betsy soon settled the matter, by expressing her opinion that he had given, or rather *thrown*, his daughter away, long since; and that

any stranger might now perform what remained to be done in that way.

"I must call her, however," added Betsy, looking rather hastily towards the clock; and so saying, she ran up stairs, but did not succeed in obtaining an answer for some time, for Dorothy had sunk into that kind of morning sleep, which after a restless, weary night seems to have no waking, and when it is at last by violence shaken off, leaves nothing but exhaustion and despondency, with often a dim sense of something dreadful to be apprehended, even when in reality there is nothing to anticipate beyond the ordinary course of events.

"Betsy," said Dorothy, after ringing her bell with unusual violence, "you must assist me this morning, for I cannot dress myself. You must stay near me, for I cannot be left. How happy it must be, Betsy, to have a mother—"

"Or a father either," responded her companion.

"I might have had a father, Betsy, if I would," said Dorothy. "Don't suppose it is any unkindness on his part that keeps him away. It is at my own particular request that I have been left alone, thinking I should get through the business better if I had no one to look at whom it was possible to love."

"Except one," said Betsy, smiling; and Dorothy was willing to accept the jest upon her own words, which it would have been impossible to explain away.

"So we agreed between us, my father and I," said Dorothy, "that he should be called away to a distance just at this time, and that I should have no farewells, nor nonsense of that kind to undergo."

"Now, Betsy, you are going away again," said Dorothy with some impatience. "I tell you I cannot be left alone; and besides I want to tell you my dream."

"I was only going to get you a cup of coffee," said Betsy. "Why, your teeth are chattering in your head. You must have something warm."

"Never mind the coffee," said Dorothy. "Bridget will get that. I want to tell you my dream. You know what a cataract is, Betsy?"

"I should think so," she replied. "My mother had a cataract in her left eye."

In spite of her chattering teeth Dorothy could not help laughing, as she went on to say—"It was of a very different kind of cataract I was going to tell you—a great waterfall—did you never hear of the falls of Niagara?"

Betsy answered that she had, and her mistress went on again—"then perhaps you know that above the falls the water is very swift, but very still, carrying away whatever is borne upon its surface with a force and a certainty like the coming on of death."

"Or marriage," said Betsy.

"Yes, or marriage," responded her mistress. "Well, I dreamed that I was in a little boat alone upon the water, gliding swiftly but steadily along, without the power to stop if I had wished to do so. Gradually, more swiftly flew the boat, and I knew quite well where it was going, and yet I did not care. I began to hear the rush and roar of the great falls, and yet I did not care. I could even see the line of termination where the waters began to curl over the brink of the abyss, and yet I did not care; for though I saw nothing—not even a hand stretched out; and heard nothing—not even a distant shout; I had the fullest confidence that something would intervene to prevent my being actually whirled over the precipice and lost in the boiling gulf below."

"And *did* anything come to save you?" asked Betsy.

Her mistress shook her head. "Perhaps something would have come, but that you awoke me, just at the very point of time when I was going—Oh! such a sensation, Betsy; I cannot describe to you what it was to feel myself going, and not to see what there was that *could* save me. But, there *is* always something, is there not, Betsy? Do tell me that there is."

Betsy in her turn shook her head as she replied, "I never heard of anything, except in story books, that came to save those who rushed upon their own ruin. I know, and you know too, Miss Dalrymple, if you will give me leave to say so, that there is a great and good God above who is willing to save the most wretched, and the nearest to destruction, if they do but stop in their dangerous course, and *ask* Him to save them."

"But I don't mean that, exactly," said Dorothy.

"I don't think you do, Miss Dalrymple," said Betsy, "and consequently the less we say about being saved the better, according to my way of thinking. But hark! There's the roll of a carriage. I do believe they are coming for you, and not a bit of breakfast have you had this blessed morning. Never mind, dear. Don't tremble so. They can wait, you know. If people will come so early, so long before the proper time, there's nothing for it but to wait. You are not going to be hurried *this* morning above all others, nor yet sent fasting from your father's house. Bridget—Bridget—bring the coffee up here—bring it this moment. I do declare she has fainted, poor dear! and all because that stupid old woman could not get the breakfast ready by herself. Come, now, there's a dear creature, lean upon me, and take a drop of this eau de Cologne—just one drop."

"Is the lady ready?" asked a voice below.

"We are coming in a moment," answered Betsy.

"Lady Crawford's carriage is waiting," said the voice again.

"Coming!" cried Betsy; and in the midst of this scene of confusion in stepped the elder Miss Dalrymple, all ready for the occasion, and dressed as if she herself had been the intended bride.

"Come, Dorothy," said the aunt, "never mind your breakfast this morning. The carriage, you know, must not be kept waiting too long."

There was something in the tone of heartless indifference with which these words were spoken—something too in the selfishness of the woman who could adorn her own person on such an occasion, without ever thinking of that of the young creature who had no mother, nor representative of a mother, beyond herself, which immediately roused the high spirit of her niece; and calling to her aid that appearance of self-possession, with which Dorothy could repel the curiosity which had no sympathy to offer, the colour rushed again, for a moment, into her pallid cheeks, and she stood in her commanding attitude, receiving the finishing touches of her faithful attendant; while her aunt employed herself before the glass, in adjusting a stray ringlet which refused to be confined to its appropriate place.

In another moment the carriage was gone. It had been sent at that early hour in order that the ladies might have the opportunity of being privately received under the patronising wing of Lady Crawford, beneath whose flattering auspices the whole affair of the marriage was to be conducted.

"Ah! well-a-day!" sighed old Bridget, wiping her eyes with her apron, after the carriage had rolled away.

"Well-a-day! indeed," responded Betsy, taking up her words, though not exactly her tone; for there was a touch of sarcasm and contempt in that in which she added—"Of all the weddings I ever heard of, this is the dismalest affair! Not but that they are all melancholy enough, when one looks at them with one's eyes open; but for the most part, there is some show of pleasure—some family feeling—some comfort and satisfaction, if only in the jokes and dresses, and the kindness and good-will. But here is nothing, poor dear soul—nothing beforehand, I should say. It's to be hoped the comfort and satisfaction will come afterwards, for there's little enough now, or I'm much mistaken."

While this style of soliloquy is carried on by Betsy, for it could not be called conversation, in which her companion, long since overawed by her superior spirit, took no further part than by a few responses, most of them sad enough; we must glance for a moment at the little wayside inn, where Arnold Lee was left with letters in his hand, which he had not ceased to read, or rather to ponder over, when the morning light began to break through the windows of his silent room.

We will not assert that precisely on the same night on which Dorothy Dalrymple dreamed her Canadian dream, Arnold Lee was engaged at the midnight hour in listening to the same sounds, and gazing upon the same picture of simple happiness, more humble and yet more real in its essential elements than dreams of happiness for the most part are; but certain it was, a kind of electric intercourse of soul seemed to extend from one party to the other, just at this period of their lives; and had their destiny been such that they could have met—had a single word of kindness been exchanged between them, or a single

look reflected on one countenance the deep expression of the other, there is no saying but that the "Lost Bride of Netherby" might have had a successful imitator in the less romantic daughter of the engineer.

"But is it yet impossible to stop this marriage?" exclaimed Arnold, as he sat and dreamed alone. "I know enough of that heartless man to blast his prospects even at the altar. A brother surely has a right to speak while his broken-hearted sister lies senseless in her coffin. To-morrow *they* are to go forth, decked in their bridal array;—to-morrow, poor Lucy is to be consigned to her humble grave!"

There was something in this coincidence which seemed to give him strength and confidence. The most insurmountable difficulties suddenly occurring would no doubt have done the same; so strangely desperate, so tremendous is a naturally strong will, supported by a sense of justice and right, and secretly although unconsciously prompted by an inclination as strong as the will itself. The will, alone, may possibly be subjected to probabilities, and guided by reason; but the inclination brings such an overwhelming force along with it, adopting so many promising expedients, and wearing so many plausible disguises, that once let in under the semblance of doing right, or what is often still more influential, under that of avenging wrong, it is difficult to say to what excesses a strong character may not in this manner be led.

"It is nothing to me—nothing in the world to me," said Arnold, "what happy man Miss Dalrymple may choose for her companion through life; but that base, deceitful, avaricious wretch—that secret murderer of my sister—shall never be her husband, even yet. She may think me mad—most probably she will—but she *shall* know that he is false."

Ah! how valiant was Arnold Lee just at that moment in the cause of right—what a champion on behalf of deceived and trusting innocence—and how strongly did he feel himself bound for Dorothy Dalrymple, to do battle in her cause against all her enemies, but chiefly against him whom she had chosen for her more than friend. All that was indignant, fiery, and impetuous in his nature, was just then lighted up in the breast of this heroic youth. He cared for none of the forms and conventionalities of society—not he. He cared not for the sanctity of the church, nor for the solemnity of the rites which were about being performed there, if, indeed, the dark doom which seemed to be hanging over Dorothy's devoted head should have been so far realized; but, like herself, he was conscious, in the secret of his heart, of a strong hope—a presentiment—a conviction that even yet there would be some sudden change in her destiny, that would intervene to rescue her from so dreadful a fate. How far he himself would be instrumental in this change, he pretended not to know. He was not a person to rest under such a conviction, nor to leave it to mere chance to decide favourably. Something must be done, and done quickly; for the circumstances of the case admitted of no delay.

It was long past the midnight hour before Arnold had worked himself up to the pitch of heroism necessary for an undertaking which was to set at defiance all the common usages of society, in order to accomplish his purpose, at the risk of being suspected of madness himself. It was so long past midnight, that the grey tints of morning were already extending over the eastern hills, and bitterly did Arnold chide himself that he had delayed so long; for he was situated at present out of the line of all public traffic

or intercourse with the town of M——, and in order to reach in time the ill-fated spot to which all his thoughts were tending, he would have to travel with a speed which scarcely any human foot would be swift enough to accomplish.

Oh! for a horse, a mule, or anything with strength or speed beyond his own,—a boat upon the river with Morton to row it! Arnold rushed out into the cold morning air. The tide was out, a boat would have been of no use to him, and he had already lost some time in hurrying down to the shore.

His steps were now turned into the path by which he was accustomed to reach the scene of his labours at the embankment. There had been rain in the night, and the newly turned up earth was wet and slippery, so that his feet were uncertain in their tread. These circumstances were against him, but he was not to be daunted by dangers, nor baffled by difficulties, in his present state of mind. The slippery path might retard his progress, but his resolution never once gave way; nor did he for one moment lose his faith in the noble enterprise in which he was engaged.

“I shall rescue her yet,” said he, taking out his watch, as soon as he found himself upon the public road, and a few minutes earlier at this place than he had expected. He now looked forward and backward along the line of road, to see if any carriage, however humble, or conveyance of any description, could be discovered; but except a few scattered labourers going out to work, and a donkey tethered by the side of the foot-path, no moving object was to be seen; and Arnold, trusting again to his own feet, habitually so swift and sure, now walked with rapid strides in the direction of the town, scarcely allowing him-

self time to reply to the frequent salutations he met with by the way, from travellers more at leisure than himself, who wondered at and amused themselves with the speed at which he was going.

There are few things equal to a brisk morning walk for bringing about a healthy tone of mental as well as bodily feeling. How different, after such a walk, do many things appear from the aspect under which they presented themselves in the depth of the still night. How many purposes formed at this hour, with the feet resting on the fender, and the eye gazing intently into the fire, have been entirely walked away in the morning! But it was not so with Arnold. Although his cheek was flushed with the exercise, and his eye unusually quick and bright; although he felt too, as the day passed on, more and more forcibly his true position, and the strange reality of his present circumstances, brought painfully near by the vicinity of the town, which he was now approaching, yet never for a single moment did his resolution fail him; neither did the secret conviction vanish from his soul, that the little boat at the edge of the cataract would yet be saved.

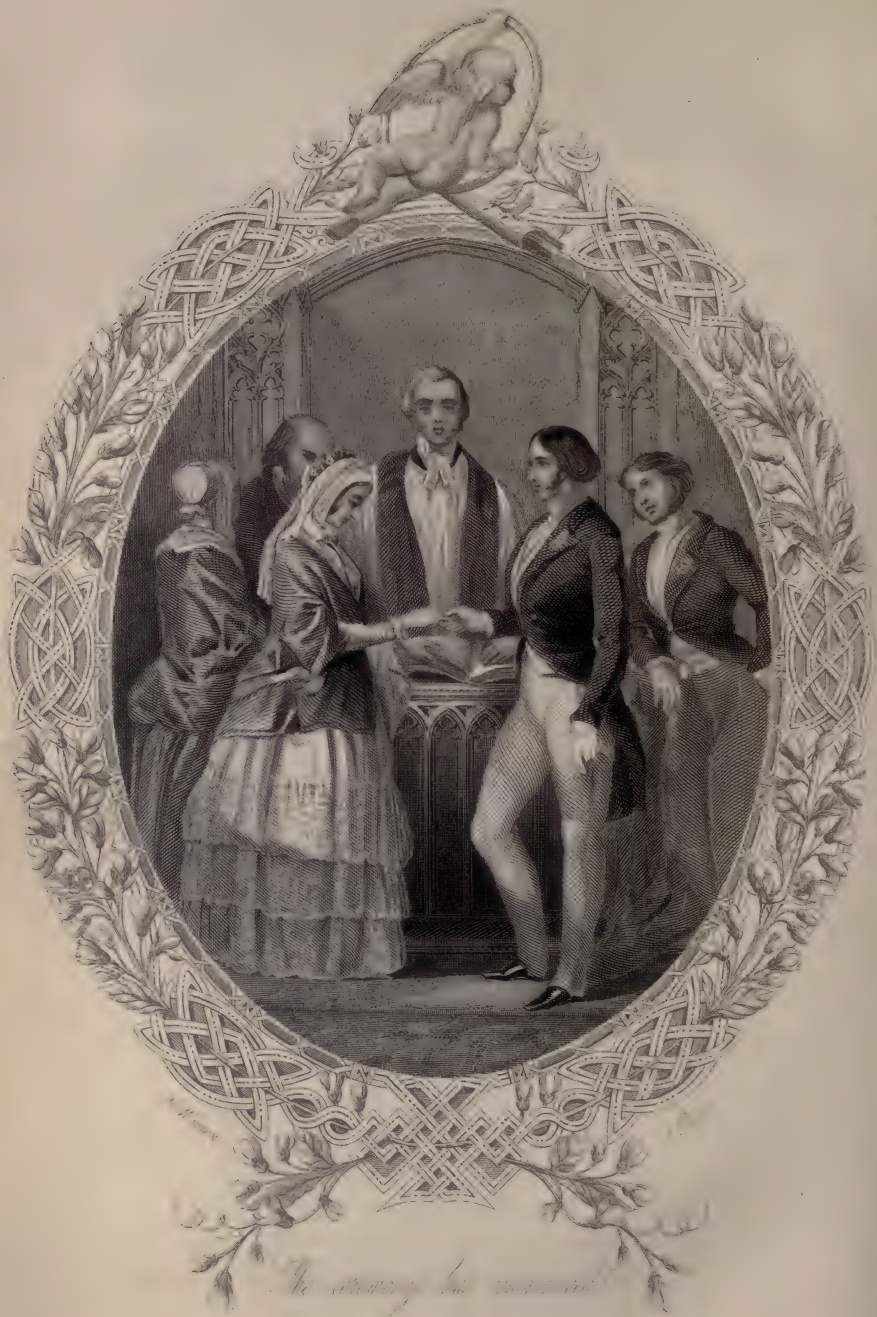
But while Arnold Lee is flying almost like a madman through roads and by-ways, which may lead him by the nearest possible track to the church he is thinking of as the goal of his desperate race; while his rapid tread is scarcely heard upon the pavement at people's doors, nor heads stretched out to see what is passing, before he is gone—vanished round some distant corner, and away again; leaping the broken fences of low cottage gardens, and away again; now emerging into a broad thoroughfare, and now into a public street,—while this struggle against time is going on, we must turn again to the bridal party, and see how near the little boat in that part of the current has

approached to the verge of the cataract, and what is its hope of rescue from the yawning abyss.

Very plentiful were the jokes and pleasant sayings that morning in Sir James Crawford's library, where stood the bride as white as her own robes, and, as Betsy had described, with her "teeth chattering in her head." Very kind was Lady Crawford, as she made up little bouquets for each of the party; and very sparkling, and animated, and conscious of the interest of the scene, was the elder Miss Dalrymple, who now and then turned with an aside to Dorothy, imploring her to look more like herself, and not to allow her spirits to give way on that occasion of all others in her life.

Poor Dorothy! her large black eyes were turning every moment with a kind of eager wildness to the door. Whom could she expect to see entering there? Surely there could be no impression upon her mind at this late hour, that help would yet be coming—that some strange messenger would enter even now to break her chains and set her free.

Ah! but there *is* a messenger upon the road, and he is swift of foot, and true of heart, and firm of purpose. Already he is pacing some of the busy streets of the town. He has but one idea—that the marriage will take place in a church where the family have always attended. How should he dream of any other? He has heard no tidings, asked no question, but taken that fact for granted, without the shadow of a doubt. And on, and on, he goes, right through the centre of the busy town, along streets that seem to have no end; and now at last the church is rising just within his aching sight. He thinks, perhaps, that the carriages will be sweeping past him, for they must go that way: and if they do!—No; he will not make a disturb-



ance in the public streets, it would be disgraceful and humiliating to *her*. For him he cared not, if the pillory held his hated form, and all mankind, women, and children, high and low, were making him the mark at which to hurl their indignation and contempt.

There had been no communication made to Arnold of the particulars of the intended marriage beyond the time at which it was to take place; and already the carriages, with their rich and interesting burdens, are starting from the door at Waverton, every one apparently in high glee on the occasion, and everything arranged with the greatest possible taste and judgment; for though the utmost privacy was intended, there was just enough display to attract the admiration of idle gazers by the way; and around the door of the church was gathered a crowd of that particular class of spectators, to whom a marriage in the higher walks of life, or where wealth has anything to do with the transaction, is always an occasion of the most profound interest.

As the party entered the door of the church, Dorothy looked round again. She was even paler than before. Help had not come yet. The little boat was very near the precipice. No shout was heard reverberating from the rocks below—no hand was seen waving from the shore. All was still, and smooth, and rapid as the stream where it glides over the edge of the precipice. Dorothy could have counted the fall of her feet upon the cold stones of the church floor. Her eye and her ear seemed awake to everything. She could even read the inscriptions over the buried dead in a distant part of the building; and she could see, when she looked up, the minutest face which grinned upon her out of the stone-work of the high arches overhead.

But now the ceremony has commenced, and Dorothy

must assume an attitude of attention, if nothing more. Of all the objects which had caught her eye in that strange wandering gaze, one only had escaped her quick and penetrating glance—that single object was her husband; but she *must* be conscious of his presence now; and coldly by the tip of her extended fingers, she suffered him to hold her hand.

It was at this precise moment that Arnold Lee was dashing past all intervening objects, straight up to the door of another and a distant church. The door was open, for workpeople were employed in repairing it within; and on he rushed, almost up to the very altar, so little had he doubted that that eventful scene was about to be transacted there. What then was his astonishment on being told by the old sexton, with many preliminary shakes of the head, that no marriage had been expected there on that day, and that the marriage of which Arnold spoke was quite a distant kind of thing, belonging to a different parish. He was, however, able to give some information where, and Arnold rushed again with speed redoubled out of the church, and down the adjoining street, where fortunately he fell in with an empty carriage, which he secured for himself, and entered without more than a moment's delay.

Rapidly flew the wheels of this carriage, for Arnold stinted not his promise of reward if the driver should arrive in time;—rapidly—desperately flew the wheels; and just as Arnold, with neck outstretched from the window, beheld the door of the church where the marriage ceremony had been performed, a merry peal of bells burst over his head, and he saw the rolling carriages, and heard the tramp of the horses' feet, as they bore the bridal party away.

CHAPTER XXII.



HERE are chaotic states of mind as well as matter, in which moments seem laden with the weight of years; and such moments, in the great convulsions by which they are marked, and the consequences by which they are followed, make eras to date from in human experience, like the floods, the earthquakes, and the volcanoes of the outer and material world. Like them, too, no science can penetrate, no history record, what strange combinations of discordant elements were brought to war against each other; nor under what array of battle or of victory that fearful struggle was commenced, and carried on, and brought to its final issue. That such tremendous conflict has existed, we know only by its consequences, and by the changes wrought upon the face of nature; that a corresponding conflict ever shook the foundations of our own existence, overturning old established usages of thought, and elements of being, we are sometimes only conscious of, by the scattered ashes, the ruined temples, and the blighted verdure which are left behind. Out of this desolation, we think not of the new creation which is about to spring—of the vineyards planted on the lava, and about to draw their luscious juices out of the very footprints of devouring fire—of populous and splendid

cities rising up and being nurtured in the bosom of a buried world—of the elements of strength and beauty scattered—seared—apparently destroyed ; yet all brought back again, and by the power of art remoulded into forms of grace, and images of life—even the very temple reared again, and happily devoted to a worship more holy and more true.

But it requires no very slight amount, either of observation or experience, to believe in this blessed renovation of the heart which has been subject to one of these convulsions, apparently so destructive as to leave nothing of its tenderness, its freshness, or its beauty, unwithered—unburnt up. And yet how many have eventually to thank God that it was so—that the whirlwind came in time—that the floods rolled over their cultivated gardens—or that the burning ashes fell upon their path. How many, rejoicing in that new creation, find, in walking over the graves of buried hopes, and immolated self, and passions wasted or subdued, a fresh invigorating happiness, brighter, purer, and more enduring, than either the beauty or the gladness of their former world.

Let then the conflict pass. It is often too terrible for words—too fierce and frightful even to contemplate. He who formed the human heart alone knows how such moments are endured ; for He alone can recreate, revivify, reclothe with beauty and enjoyment the once fertile landscape, which the rolling fire had converted into a waste of ashes.

Under the similitude of one of these great natural convulsions which mark the history of the world, we have endeavoured to describe a state of mind for which the present subject of such feeling would have found neither language nor likeness in the whole created universe.

Perhaps it was madness which had seized him, for he knew not that he trod the common earth, nor would have cared if he had trod on fire. Habit is often too strong for impulse, or he would have dashed himself upon the stones instead of passing on in his accustomed manner, which he did, no one observing, knowing—perhaps no one caring, that he was for the moment bereft of the reason of a man, and consequently ready for anything, however desperate, that might put an end to thought and feeling; only that habit urged him on to walk the streets like other men, and outwardly to conduct himself like an ordinary and unimpassioned being.

From a marriage to a funeral, both on the same day, there would, on any common occasion, have been a painful transition; but just now, and before his better feelings were awake, Arnold Lee could have stood without a tear beside the grave of his mother. It would almost have been a relief, under the present tempest of his soul, to have felt that everything to him was blasted, ruined, utterly destroyed; and that he had literally, as his rebellious heart still whispered, nothing to be thankful for.

While pacing the crowded streets of the busy town, and passing hundreds of human beings unconscious of his circumstances, and consequently unsympathising towards his sufferings, the tumult of his mind seemed rather to increase, than to find alleviation; but as he drew near to those humble dwellings which were scattered about the vicinity of the town in the direction where his mother dwelt, a different tone was given to his feelings, and a calmer, though perhaps a darker, shadow cast upon his soul.

It was along these obscure and uninviting paths that he had conducted his mother and sister at the time of their

great calamity, and while the severity of the blow which had struck down all their earthly hopes was yet fresh upon them. It was here that his grateful heart had rejoiced in the satisfaction of beholding his mother comparatively happy—of knowing that her wounded spirit was peaceful, and solaced; it was here that they had taken sweet counsel together, as to the narrow but difficult path which they had both to tread. It was here that they had been all in all to each other, and now how different was the aspect of this lowly spot of earth to him!—how much diminished in importance!—how dwindled to a speck in his vast hemisphere of thought! Since then how entirely had a stranger occupied his heart, forcing out from its secret treasury even that idol of his childhood, that friend of his riper years, that angel spirit sent to be the guide and comforter of his.

Like the benighted wanderer who returns to the blaze of his own cottage fire, after having been misled by the ignis fatuus dancing over the dangerous marsh; so Arnold turned his thoughts once more into that familiar and natural channel which had so often led him home to the faithful and untiring companionship of his mother. It might be only for a brief space that he would be able thus to master and control them, but there was satisfaction in the attempt, and he roused himself in proportion to its difficulty.

A quiet and uneventful visit to his mother's humble dwelling would scarcely have supported Arnold under these endeavours; but no sooner had he caught a distant view of the low tenement, than he started to behold what he still had been expecting to see—strange men passing in and out of the door, and all those preparations going on which indicate the setting out of a funeral procession.

“And I have left her alone,” said Arnold, quickening his steps, “to endure all this without support or sympathy, while I was aping the fool at that monstrous wedding!”

Under this quick sense of having failed in the most sacred duty, Arnold became himself again; and forcing his way into the house amidst its strange occupants, he ascended immediately into the little chamber where his mother sat alone, awaiting her summons to attend—she had begun to fear, as the only mourner in the funeral train.

It had felt peculiarly hard to Mrs. Lee to be unsupported by her son, or by any other friend, on such an occasion; and almost for the first time since his childhood, she spoke to him in a tone of slight reproach as he entered the room, asking him why he had been so long in coming, whether he had not received her letters, and other questions which too plainly indicated what had been the nature of her solitary and unshared sufferings, while keeping her long watch beside the dead.

“Do not ask me now,” said Arnold, throwing his arms around his mother’s neck. “I have been lost—asleep—dead. But I am awake again now, mother—awake, and alive; only tell me what there is to do, that I may be helping you in something, even at this late hour.”

“Those men,” said Mrs. Lee, with a kind of shuddering appeal to her son, as if she would be thankful for anything to stand between herself and them; and Arnold, understanding the acuteness of her feelings, and the natural repulsion which some persons experience to all intercourse with the mere ordinary and indifferent agents employed on such occasions, immediately undertook what further directions were necessary, alternately fulfilling these duties in his usual prompt and efficient manner, and returning to

his mother to breathe some kind or soothing expression into her patient ear.

In the mind of Mrs. Lee there were no weak regrets that she was following her daughter to the grave. Much there unquestionably was for a mother to feel in the circumstances and manner of her death, as well as in the simple fact of so beautiful and tender a flower being cut off from the earth in the prime of its loveliness, in the full splendour of its bloom. But weaned as her heart had lately been from all its love of earth, and earthly things, driven out from its native home, with so many of the fountains of its tenderest feelings dried up, or poisoned at their source, she had learned to look on early death as a circumstance to be wished for rather than regretted—on the Christian's death as a merciful deliverance from danger and from suffering—a bright and blessed opening into peace, and rest, and joy. It is true the stroke had been heavy in its falling, but now its work was done, and she was ready to look with calmness into the deep dark grave, beholding there only the ashes which the fire had left; but turning upward a more exulting and comprehensive gaze to where another gentle spirit, redeemed and purified, was added to the glorious throng for ever rejoicing around the throne, in an atmosphere of love and light.

It was therefore only the tenderness of a sensitive and loving nature which brought the tears into the mother's eyes, when at last the summons came for her to descend and take her place in the procession, if such it might be called, which comprehended so small and so humble an attendance. Arm-in-arm walked the mother and the son, yet more closely linked together in feeling, as the sad and sole representatives of a once honoured family, now ranking in the world's opinion amongst the degraded, and the

poor, and scarcely deemed worthy of being remarked upon in their unobtrusive grief; for except that a few loiterers on the road stood still as the funeral passed; or women returning from the well set down their pails for a short breathing-time; or children going out to school made holiday for death, and scampered off to the churchyard; there was no other sensation created in the neighbourhood, nor scarcely any comment made upon the circumstances of those concerned in the transaction. It was sufficient for such observers that the parties were poor, the followers few, and the set-out altogether undignified by worldly honours or distinction. When we complain of poverty, and speak with bitterness of its hardships and privations, surely we ought to remember in its favour this one grand prerogative—that the poor pass on, ungazed at in their grief.

But if the feelings of the mother might have been easily understood as she paced silently and sadly towards that grave, there was a heart beating quickly beside her own, whose mingled emotions it would have been impossible to describe. Overwhelmed with the deepest compunction for his recent neglect, and covered with shame for the unsatisfactoriness—to say nothing of the *unworthiness* of the cause, Arnold entered into a silent communion with his own soul, more solemn, and more searching, than it had ever been subjected to before. Nor was it in relation to the past or the present alone that this deep exercise was carried on. As usual with him, the past was regarded in strict reference to the future; and thus his thoughts went on, and on, until they grew into a firm resolve, that come what would, he never would again neglect a high and sacred duty for the luxury of gratifying any merely selfish purpose.

And what was it, after all, which had led him thus away from natural claims and home affections? a dream—a vision—a meteor of the night, shooting athwart the heaven of his imagination. And had the vision disappeared—the meteor sunk—been utterly extinguished? Arnold planted his firm foot upon the earth beside his sister's grave, and with fingers locked tightly in each other, as if they had been iron bands, looked up to the blue sky above. A sudden convulsion seemed to pass over his face, disturbing every feature, so desperate was the struggle he maintained with his rebellious heart. Which way the struggle ended, whether victoriously to that strong heart, or to the stronger will and loftier reason by which it was habitually held subject, may best be understood by the influence which that moment exercised over his after life.

On returning from the solemn duties of the day to her now vacant-looking and dreary home, Mrs. Lee was evidently appalled by the aspect which it wore, divested of the charm which had so long bound her to the spot. Arnold observed the disconsolate expression of her countenance as she drew aside the closed curtains, opened the little window, and then sunk down faint and exhausted in her seat, like one who knows not any purpose for which life is lent another day. It was a feeling more fit for silent sympathy than for words, and Arnold from that moment determined that he would, if possible, find for his mother another home.

This idea was the more reasonable, as Mrs. Lee was not now so destitute of resources as to render it necessary to hide her head under so mean a shelter as she had once been glad to find beneath the gardener's roof; for besides the dying bequest of her father, there had been for some

time an amount of assistance sent from the Hall, and sent in such a manner, that it would have been almost impossible so far to wound the kind and generous feelings of the giver, as to refuse acceptance of her really welcome aid. Nor was it in any way galling to the feelings of Mrs. Lee to accept of help from Margaret's hand. Of all earthly sources she considered that she had the most legitimate claim upon this; and not knowing the style or manner in which the widow of her father was living, nor the narrow boundary of her resources, it was natural for a woman in the circumstances of Mrs. Lee, to feel, even without grudging Margaret one item of her wealth, that the owner of such an amount of property could not act otherwise with any satisfaction to an honourable or generous mind.

It is just possible there might be a little touch of this feeling at her heart, when Mrs. Lee replied, about this time, to a kind and affectionate letter from Margaret, urging her to become a resident at the Hall as her rightful home. Possibly she knew not herself exactly what that feeling was, when she penned her somewhat short reply. Not that her words betrayed anything like chagrin, or that she was herself the subject of one unamiable thought; but something flashed across her mind like a determination not to make Hatherstone, of all places, her home; and therefore she wrote rather more decidedly than was quite necessary for one so gentle as Margaret, who read the letter very thoughtfully, then looked at the superscription, and then folded it within its envelope, and never opened it again.

Perhaps there might be recollections connected with Hatherstone, too painfully familiar to the mind of Mrs. Lee, to render a residence in that secluded spot an eligible

change for her. Weary as she was with a life of almost unceasing anxiety and care, she yet wanted something more than rest; for, like her son, she was of too active a temperament willingly to yield to the luxury of repose, while any place of usefulness remained for her to fill. How such a place could now be found, was a question of great importance to Arnold, and of equal delicacy, for a mere *situation*, to use the word in its common acceptation, was the last expedient he would have thought of for his mother. That which he ardently desired, was some source of interest to her mind, some claim upon her sympathy or affection, that would at once call forth the higher and nobler faculties of her nature, and make her feel that her life and her love were still of value to her fellow-beings.

"For myself," said Arnold, as they sat conversing together late on the night of the funeral, for it was the last he would be able to devote to such a purpose for some time to come—"for myself, I am a mere earth-worm—a dweller amongst mud and mire, with a home little better than a beaver's hut. Indeed, such is my domestic discomfort, that it could only be made worse by seeing any one whom I loved or cared for the companion of my lot."

"Ah!" said his mother, "I often wish you had a home of your own, and a companion to share it; but I suppose that must not be yet."

"Never—never!" exclaimed Arnold.

"My dear boy," replied his mother, "you must not speak in that manner. The bitterest thought that ever crosses my mind, is the fear that what has transpired in your short but eventful history, may have shut you out from the enjoyment of those domestic relations for which

you are so peculiarly fitted, both in your habits and disposition."

"Mother," said Arnold, "the less you ever speak to me on subjects of this kind the better."

"Pardon me, dearest," said Mrs. Lee, with a look of meek suffering. "I knew how hard the trial to you was, and it was not delicate in me to mention it."

"What trial?" asked Arnold.

"The trial alluded to," replied his mother. "In plain words, the trial of not being in a position to think of marriage."

"Say, rather," replied Arnold, "the trial of having nothing but poverty and a blighted name to offer to the woman I could love."

"Yes, there," said Mrs. Lee, "you have described exactly what I meant. But you look disturbed and angry, Arnold. I pray you deal gently with me to night. Remember *I* was not the offender."

"Mother," said Arnold, "you never did, you never *could* offend me in thought, word, or deed. Neither am I entertaining an angry feeling against any one; but you have put me in mind of a trial still more severe than any we have spoken of, and I was feeling just then as I fancy I *should* feel, were that trial ever to be mine."

"To what do you allude?" asked Mrs. Lee.

"You have spoken," said Arnold, "of poverty and a blighted name, and of the power which both combined possess to cut a man off from his social and domestic affections; but the trial I was thinking of is where these offerings *are* actually *made*; and where a heart as warm as it is true is offered with them; and all are thrown back with scorn and derision—rejected—trampled upon—utterly contemned."

Mrs. Lee looked earnestly into the face of her son, and for the first time a suspicion awoke in her mind, that perhaps there had been reasons of a more intimate and delicate nature than he liked to speak of, for his recent silence towards herself, and apparent neglect of her forlorn and desolate condition; but not wishing to appear curious, nor yet to intrude in any other way upon secrets, which if they did in reality exist, were not easily communicated, she endeavoured to give the conversation a less exciting tone, by turning immediately to some familiar topics which were highly necessary to be discussed before she should be again separated from her son.

Amongst these, the most important was her own settlement in a more eligible home. At first, Arnold appeared to be paying but little attention to what was said. His eyes were fixed upon the fire, and he made no remark upon that or any other subject. At last his countenance suddenly changed, and looking round to his mother, he said, "I do believe I have hit upon the very thing. I know a small family, consisting only of a brother and a sister, just now living in a larger and more expensive house than is adapted to their circumstances, yet of which they would be glad to retain possession. They want a friend, too—exactly such a friend as yourself. I will go to-morrow and see what can be done, if you will give me leave."

Mrs. Lee was inclined to smile at the promptness with which her son appeared about to settle this important business, as she replied very naturally that she must first know a little more of the family in question. If, however, further inquiries should elicit nothing unsatisfactory, she thought with Arnold, that such a home might possibly be conducive to benefit on both sides, she herself

being by no means disinclined to supply the place of a friend wherever her advice or assistance might be availing.

But before those negotiations are concluded, which Arnold entered upon with the greatest alacrity on the following morning, it will be necessary to look in again upon the brother and sister, into whose society he had been so unexpectedly thrown.

CHAPTER XXIII.



HAT a charming—what an interesting self-devotion is that of Edith Egerton to her brother,” said some of those few friends, who, attracted by the sweetness and softness of the one, and the bright intelligence of the other, were in the habit of spending now and then an hour in their society.

These friends were for the most part of a class bordering upon the religious world. Edith sought such for her acquaintance. Indeed, she believed herself to be a religious person, and was perfectly familiar with all the phraseology peculiar to that class, and which by a strange perversion of taste, as well as reason, has come to be too frequently regarded as a sort of passport, a letter of credit, amongst such parties, wherever they may meet.

It is not necessary to specify to what particular sect or profession Edith Egerton belonged; but, that she ought to be a staunch partizan of the class amongst which she was born and educated, was as much her belief, as that she ought to perform any of those christian duties which are specified in the Bible, and required by all. Thus to go forth on a Sunday morning exceedingly well dressed, early too, and ready in her accustomed place, and to

be seen of men and women to worship there, was to satisfy her conscience for the day, and sometimes even for the week, that all had been done which the claims of religion required. Beyond this, Edith had on her own account a large supply of works of supererogation—kindnesses—acts of self-sacrifice—generous givings, and givings up—a whole life full laid out for the service of another, all which her flattering friends were accustomed to tell her was far too much—that she was good to excess—put every one to shame—and was making a martyr of herself, with a generous nobility beyond the requirements even of the most devoted affection. And then Edith smiled, and sighed, and shook her head, and wished it was so, and spoke of her humble efforts with apparent shame, and called herself the most unworthy of all human beings.

Nor let us be too quick to pronounce the hard sentence of the hypocrite upon characters of this description, for may not the root of the whole matter be found, rather in ignorance of self, and of the common principles of human nature; in a low estimate of the requirements of the divine law; in false conclusions drawn from revelation; and in a servile creeping under the generally approved opinions of mankind, as a guide in every difficulty, and a protection from all blame?

As regards the character in question, most certainly there was no pride in herself, but a longing—a too earnest longing to be thought well of by those whom she loved, admired, and looked up to. While walking in the path she fancied they sanctioned, how could she err? While occupying a distinguished position amongst society of this description, how could she be wrong? Let it be remembered, however, that the society alluded to consisted of

the *borderers* upon religious ground; and that a border country is usually distinguished by perversion or neglect of law; and in individual instances, by a trenching upon the privileges of one party, often to the injury of both.

As in similar cases, there were many excuses to be drawn from the past in this. A childhood without moral culture, though abounding in religious advice, and even *that* withdrawn at a period of life when it might in some measure have supplied the want of the other—an absorbing affection on the part of the sister, which became a kind of religion to her, and so, to a great extent, satisfied her soul—all these circumstances had tended to warp a judgment naturally good, but which too soon, and too entirely made subservient to the impulse of affection, saw nothing, understood nothing, believed nothing, but what reached it through a false, and often a flattering medium. For the world delights in good impulse, praises, admires, believes in it, wherever it is made manifest. It is good *principle* which it cannot, or will not appreciate—good principle which it passes coldly by, or speaks of with the lip of scorn—good principle which it persecutes until honesty is turned to shame, and poverty to theft—good principle which it still cries out for, proclaiming the want of, and professing to glorify; yet will neither honour, nor believe in, when dwelling in humble weeds within the very sound of this perpetual cry. It is true that the principle without the impulse, so far as kindness goes, would make individually but a cold and unlovely character; but the grand mistake which the world so frequently makes, is that of admiring the impulse as much or more without the principle than with it.

It may readily be supposed that the event of the shipwreck on the coast so near the town of M—— would give

rise to no small amount of interest and excitement, which subsided only as the season advanced, and other events of a similar or more interesting nature, took possession of the public mind. Even then the young lady who had been rescued in so wonderful a manner, was the theme of frequent conversation, and her charms, both of mind and person, were magnified to a degree of perfection almost superhuman. Happy then for a short time in the parties of M—— were those fortunate individuals who had seen this paragon of beauty; and still happier those who enjoyed so much of her acquaintance, as to speak with certainty of some of the leading facts of that terrible catastrophe, which had thrown her like some divinity of old upon their shores.

Alas! for that divinity, it had dwelt for the most part in lodgings in the same town for the space of twenty years, and had never received its apotheosis before. How much longer it might have dwelt there obscurely, and unregarded, it would be impossible to say; for just at the present moment there were few subjects of conversation so popular as the beauty, the accomplishments, and the virtues of that lovely being who possessed the extraordinary merit of having been rescued from the waves of a rough sea.

We will do Miss Egerton the justice, however, to state that these her newly acquired honours were borne very blushingly and meekly on her part. She was unquestionably glad to be thought well of, and in her heart she felt more gratitude to society than the occasion really demanded; but all the praise, and at least half the admiration she would have been much happier to lay at the feet of her brother, than to appropriate herself.

“ If Henry could only have been shipwrecked, and not

hurt," she sometimes sighed to herself, "what a happiness it might have been. I must not have him overlooked, and yet how to conquer that morbid sensitiveness of his, I am at a loss to imagine."

The fact was, the lameness of Henry Egerton, attended as it was by the disfigurement of one limb, constituted in his mind an insuperable impediment to his either visiting or receiving visitors, with the exception of now and then a short call from some of his most intimate friends. All the flattery of his sister, and she was no economist in its bestowment, and all her assurances that he had charms of person, and powers of conversation, more than sufficient to draw away the attention of any one from this defect—all that she could say to stimulate his vanity in other quarters, and to soothe his self-love in this, had hitherto been insufficient to overcome the shrinking which he felt when under the observation of any strange or curious eye.

It seemed almost as if nature had played with the sensitive youth one of her wild vagaries, in which, by a strange oversight, she had forgotten to be kind; for if anything could have drawn away attention from such a defect, it might have been expected from the exquisite beauty of his expressive countenance, and from the delicacy and gracefulness of his person in general.

"You would have been too beautiful," his sister often said to him; and though she meant it kindly, the words shot like an arrow to his heart.

"And therefore I was made a monster of," he would sometimes reply, with an agonised expression of countenance, which made his sister think she would never risk that ill-judged observation again.

Perhaps the brother knew not the nature and the extent of the charm to which his sister alluded; for who

can understand or know the expression of their own countenance, or the influence of their voice and manners as they impress the mind, or affect the feelings of others? It was, in fact, impossible for Henry Egerton to see his own face as it really was, animated, beaming, intelligent—his dark eyes looking out from a depth of soul incomprehensible to common observers, but still beautiful and impressive in its unrevealed mystery; as deep, clear water is beautiful, though we cannot see, nor even guess by what extent of line it could be sounded.

In his thin features generally there might have been a touch of sharpness, the result of long suffering; but that a smile of peculiar sweetness, and a voice modulated to every tone of sadness, and of sympathy with grief, redeemed his countenance from an expression which would have belied the language of his soul. With all his sensitiveness to pain of every kind, there was no bitterness or harshness blended with his nature, beyond an indignant hatred of falsehood, oppression, and wrong of every kind. He was not professedly religious, like his sister, for he was beset with strange and fearful doubts, and could not reconcile the seeming contradictions which interposed between the book of revelation, and that book of beauty on which in imagination he perpetually gazed—luxuriated—lived. In vain he tried to plunge his soul into a purer, holier, sublimer faith, than that of the Bible. Philosophy, ancient and modern, was tried in vain. He could not find the thing he sought; and not contented with a Saviour born at Bethlehem, he left the question of salvation to be decided by some future development, which, he persuaded himself, was yet to be brought to light, and unravelled from the deep mystery of mind.

In all such trains of thought, it was impossible for

Edith to go along with her brother, or even to understand his meaning, if he endeavoured to explain them to her listening and ever-patient ear. Thus it was that he still dwelt alone, as poets must dwell, through the greater portion of their lives; and thus it was that he sought more earnestly that communion with distant and unknown minds, though kindred in feeling, which is ever the strongest incentive to the writer to cast his thoughts before the public, in the fond and cheering hope, that somewhere in the world they will find an echo—a response—perhaps a recognition; as if in the relationships of some previous existence they had existed and been nurtured together.

That the highest degree of poetical feeling is not always associated with the greatest amount of poetical talent, is a fact of somewhat melancholy tendency to those who possess the former gift without the latter. Such was the misfortune of Henry Egerton; for while his ideas soared to the loftiest sublimity, or melted into the profoundest depth of tenderness; while he looked on beauty with a lover's eye; and listened to the harmony of nature with an ear intensely sensitive to all its sweetest notes; his own verse—the song—the music of his own creating, was even to his own perceptions so far below the melody of many inferior minds, as in itself to afford him infinitely more pain than pleasure. Aware, however, that the public does not always admire most what is really the best, he still wrote on, in the fond hope that some would admire, though many might condemn. There was one alternative to which he dared not look, and it was the most probable of all—that the public would do neither; that the efforts of his genius would be cast upon the world in vain, and that the expressions—"harmless," "well-meant," or

“smoothly worded,” might be the meed of praise awarded to his best endeavours.

It was in order to raise his mind above this terrible apprehension, and to keep from it so fearful and fatal a truth, that his sister tortured her ingenuity, and often wasted her scanty means. The great seclusion of her brother's life was highly favourable to her well-intended but mistaken kindness ; and for this reason she almost dreaded that he would yield to the solicitations of his friends, and mix in the society which he was born to ornament. If for once only he could overcome his diffidence on this point, if for once he could see and feel the exercise of that power over others for which his talents were so admirably calculated, there could be no doubt but he would find his highest enjoyment in the social intercourse of cultivated minds. But if once admitted into society, and made conversant with the opinions and transactions of the literary world, Edith knew too well that her own little *amiable deceptions*, as she fancied them, would soon be discovered, and that she herself would sink in her brother's confidence and esteem.

Thus far circumstances had been highly favourable to the part she was acting. No book was admitted into the house but what passed through her hands, and it was an easy thing to prevent any slighting or unfavourable review ever reaching those of her brother. As she was in the habit of reading aloud to him when he was weary, it was an easy thing, too, to read to him such slight mention as she found, under an improved version, with many flattering additions, and then to mislay the volume, or to take care that it should be sent away before it was likely to be asked for.

But the grand invention above all, and that upon which

Edith most prided herself, was the answering his verses herself under the fictitious name of Floresca, in a light kind of periodical which happened to be very popular about this time. This expedient was the more agreeable to Edith, because it involved less palpable deception; and from the effect produced upon her brother's feelings, it promised to be more successful than anything she had ever thought of before. Her own lines then she could read aloud with the utmost satisfaction and complacency; and because they were actually there—printed word for word as she read them, the falsehood, if there really was any, was not of such a nature as to awaken in her conscience the least alarm.

In her poetry Edith was more successful than might have been expected, having seldom, if ever before, made a similar attempt. But this was nothing to the young poet, provided it did not jar upon his ear. The *spirit* which it breathed was everything to him. His song had found an echo—he was no longer alone.

Even Edith herself was startled and alarmed at the intense emotion which this circumstance called forth. Had she better understood the strength of her brother's feelings, and the depth of his character, she would never have ventured upon so dangerous an experiment. With her it had been the pleasant pastime of an idle moment, intended as a kind of jest; such as might afford a transient gratification, but could not possibly give pain to him; it was the discovery of a new and close relationship in the region of thought; the binding of his hitherto isolated existence by a newly found, and precious link, to that great chain of kindred fellowship which unites the different elements of spiritual life.

When Edith Egerton, on this occasion, read her own

lines aloud, she had commenced with a smile upon her lips, but glancing from the paper which she held in her hand, the riveted attention with which her brother was listening, caught her eye; and eager as she always was to excite and interest him on subjects likely to afford him pleasure, she went on to the end of the verses with additional pathos in her voice and manner.

"Give me the paper," said her brother, as soon as she had done; and seizing it in his hand, his eye glanced hastily at the signature below. "Floresca," said he, "what a charming name! Here is no date, I perceive. How will it be possible, Edith, do you think, to discover who is the writer of these lines?"

"Do you think them so very beautiful?" asked Edith, smiling.

"They are beautiful to me," replied her brother.

"How so?" asked Edith again.

"Because they are the first," said he, "that ever expressed a kindly feeling for myself."

"But why," said Edith, "is this feeling so much more valuable expressed in poetry, than in prose?"

"If you were a poet," replied he, "you would not ask that question. A poet is always a kind of exile from a higher sphere—an alien upon earth. Is it nothing then to him to hear, in his native language, words of kindness, sympathy, and affection, spoken to himself? Oh, Edith, you do not know—you cannot understand the intense happiness which those lines have given me! I will write again this very night before I sleep. Floresca will answer me again, and thus I shall never be alone."

"I think," said Edith very naturally, "if I were you, I would not write quite so soon."

"Why not?" asked her brother impatiently.

"It might seem too eager," replied Edith, "and I should think no lady would like to be writing verses every week to a gentleman."

"Leave that to me," said Henry, with an earnestness and gravity which would have been very touching to any one capable of estimating the noble dignity of truth, contrasted with the meanness of falsehood, and the degrading circumstances with which it is always more or less attended.

All this had taken place previous to the journey performed by Edith Egerton, and terminating in the event which brought her so suddenly into acquaintance with Arnold Lee; and the first evening which the brother and sister shared together after their reunion was spent by the former in complaining of the long silence of Floresca, during the whole time of his sister's absence from home.

"But have you yourself been faithful?" asked Edith, "and have you written regularly?"

"Every week," replied her brother, "I have complained—remonstrated—done everything I could."

"Perhaps you will allow me to see your lines?" said Edith.

"The lines themselves," observed Henry, "were nothing; but the feeling they conveyed might surely have been better appreciated."

"Perhaps your unknown friend was absent," Edith suggested. "We shall see what another week will bring forth. In the meantime, I should like to see all that you have written."

The brother pointed listlessly to a heap of papers now thrown aside, in which his unanswered verses had been published. His very heart seemed failing him; and yet in turning them over, he looked with the fond yearning of

affection to some, which, as he said, ought to have been better appreciated. After all, he recurred to the public. "And they spoke of me sometimes in Scotland, did they?" said he, assuming a tone of indifference.

"You know," replied Edith, "I was not in the way of hearing subjects of that kind discussed."

"But in Edinburgh?" continued her brother. "You spent a week there, at least. What did they say of my verses in Edinburgh?"

"So far as I could learn," replied Edith, "they were thought very highly of in Edinburgh; but you must remember my object was business, not literature; and even in Edinburgh I was not thrown much into the way of conversation likely to turn upon poetry or poets."

"So it is, Edith," sighed her brother, "ever and ever this faint praise. I shall never do anything to be remembered for when I am dead. And yet I feel sometimes—nay I actually *know* that the power is in me."

"No doubt it is," replied Edith, "and for that very reason you ought not to despond. Remember how many of the brightest luminaries the world has ever known have had, like you, to "bide their time." Public opinion, you know, is sometimes warped for a while, and turned aside from real excellence, especially in the higher ranges of art. It is surely something to have written well, although the world may not have the good taste to perceive it."

The poet shook his head despondingly. His sister was evidently not acquainted with those deep secrets, out of which *he* drew both his happiness and his misery. That solitary eminence which she had pointed out as a sufficient end to attain—unshared, unenvied, unobserved—

had never been the goal of his ambition. A consciousness of talent, of power, in short of genius itself, was well ; but he could enjoy that, and be still. When he had written, and sent forth his thoughts into the world, the case was widely altered. When he had poured his soul out, even in its tenderness, until each drop of feeling had assumed a palpable form, and so had become the purchased property of others, never to be recalled, nor rendered back again into the parent fountain, it was just so much of himself, of his dearest, most secret, and most intimate self, that was either slighted or valued then—that was either cherished or rejected—either trampled upon, like the common dust beneath the traveller's careless foot, or hoarded up with other "things of beauty," to be a "joy for ever."

It was after an evening spent in unsatisfactory discussions on subjects of this nature, that Miss Egerton was surprised on the following morning by that early call from Arnold Lee, which has already been alluded to as the preliminary step towards the favourable change in his mother's circumstances, which he now contemplated, and which he felt impatient to bring to an issue.

Indeed, so earnest was Arnold in accomplishing this one object, that he scarcely allowed himself time to think in what manner it could with the greatest delicacy be laid before the parties most concerned. There was, however, a frankness in the character of Miss Egerton, accompanying an evident willingness to be obliged, as well as to oblige, which rendered it more easy with her than with persons in general, to transact any business of a delicate or intricate nature. Arnold therefore spoke directly to the point, by reminding her of the question she had lately asked him, relating to the possibility of their retaining

possession of their present habitation, without sufficient means to pay for it.

"True," said Miss Egerton, "that is one of my greatest anxieties at present. May I hope that you have something to suggest?"

"I am afraid," said Arnold, "I must be both very plain and very short, for I have no time to spare. You must pardon me, therefore, if I speak in the homely and unpolished terms of ordinary business."

"Speak as you like," said Edith, smiling. "I do not think you are very likely to offend."

"Well, then," said Arnold, "as your house seems larger than you require, how would you like to admit a lodger?"

It seemed as if the blood of all the Egertons who had ever lived was at that moment boiling in the veins of Edith, so deep was the colour which rushed into her face. Her emotion, in fact, was so strong that she could not speak for some time; and Arnold perceiving what he had done, was the first to break the painful silence which ensued.

"I perceive," he observed, "that my proposal is distasteful to you, and I am now sorry that I made it; but when I tell you that the addition to your household which I proposed was my own mother—to me the most angelic being that ever walked this earth, you cannot think that my plan had anything in the *spirit* of it, whatever it might have in the words, at all derogatory to the honour of you or your house."

"Your own mother?" said Edith, looking up.

"Yes," replied Arnold, "my widowed mother, almost childless now, for she and I must dwell apart; and it was but yesterday that we stood together beside my sister's

grave; and we were all that remained to her of a once honoured and wealthy family."

"If your mother is wealthy," Edith began; but Arnold interrupted her.

"Do not mistake me," said he, "we are poor enough now. My mother has passed through afflictions that would have crushed a nature less humble, self-devoted, and resigned. Ah, if you did but know her! Constant association with so beautiful a character might do good to any one. I only wish it had done more to me."

"You interest me deeply," said Edith. "How much I should like to be of some service—some comfort to a lady like your mother."

"She is now," resumed Arnold, "entirely alone, and having spent the last six months in unremitting attendance upon my sister, I dread the solitude and inaction of her present state more than I can express."

"Let me go to her," said Edith, "or rather let me bring her here, and cherish her, and be to her a second daughter."

"I could not desire for you a happier duty," replied Arnold. "But on what terms, may I ask, would you bring my mother here, since you have rejected mine?"

"On what terms?" asked Edith. "How strangely you express yourself. May I not bring your mother to dwell with us, and to be a mother to Henry and me?"

"That is the first wish of my heart, just now," replied Arnold, but there are still terms to be agreed upon. My mother is not a pauper, Miss Egerton, to be received by an act of charity; nor, if I understand you aright, are you and Mr. Egerton exactly in the position to perform such an act."

"You distress me," said Edith. "I cannot—I really

cannot make a matter of business of anything in which my heart is concerned."

"My mother," observed Arnold, "is a high-minded, honourable woman, and you would distress her a thousand times more by making her the receiver of the slightest obligation which you could not pay for."

"Ah! you speak so unkindly," said Edith, in a tone of remonstrance.

"Not in the least," said Arnold. "If I had time I would show you how my view of the case is infinitely more kind than yours. Receive my mother if you please on the fair terms of an ordinary lodger, and she may be a happiness—a blessing to you as long as you live. Reject my proposal, if you please, and I shall go in search of another home."

"But a lodger! Mr. Lee," said Edith, with an expression of the utmost contempt. "Only think of Henry and me as keepers of a boarding house!"

"Call it what you please," said Arnold. "I cannot wait much longer for your decision."

"Ah!" said Edith, with one of her sweetest and most pleading looks, "if you would but allow me to act in this affair according to the dictates of my own heart?"

"Your heart is very good," said Arnold, "but my mother is one who acts from principle, as well as feeling. If it had not been her early habit to do so, she has seen too much of the want of principle in human conduct for her to forget the importance of it now."

"I feel," said Edith, "that I sadly need such a friend as you describe in your mother. But even if I should be able to overcome my own repugnance to the coarse and selfish terms which you propose, how should I ever be able to reconcile them to my brother?"

"You pay your brother a poor compliment," observed Arnold, "when you speak of him as unable to look fairly at things honourable and reputable in the sight of all the world."

"But just imagine such a thing!" said Edith, returning to her former view of the subject. "If I should really love your mother, and I never shall forget that she is the mother of him who saved my life at the risk of his own—if I should really love and honour her, and then ask money at her hands? I cannot do it, indeed, I cannot!"

"I will engage," said Arnold, smiling, "that you shall never have to *ask* for it, at any rate."

"But to *receive* it," said Edith, "would be quite as bad. Once more, I implore you, to let me enjoy the privilege of making what return I can to your mother for the life which I owe to you. It would be so beautiful, so congenial to my feelings, to be thus perpetually paying off that mighty debt?"

"Miss Egerton," said Arnold, very gravely, "there is an important truth which I should like to impress upon your mind, and, if possible, I would do so in characters never to be obliterated."

"What is it?" asked Edith. "I do not think I shall forget it, if you think it is so important."

"It is this," said Arnold—"that in conferring obligations, a noble and a generous nature always acts as if the persons obliged were noble and generous too; an honourable nature consults their honour; an honest nature their integrity and uprightness; thus the highest and most perfect kindness is that which places the favoured party in a position at once agreeable, delicate, and dignified. Now ask your own heart whether such would be the position

of my mother as a dependent upon your goodness, even if you possessed the wealth of a Cræsus?"

"I begin to understand you now," said Edith. "Will your mother talk to me in this manner? Will she make me wiser—more noble—and altogether better than I am?"

"She will endeavour to do so," replied Arnold, "and I know no one more likely to succeed, if you will permit her; but I must recur again to business, and ask if now you consent that my mother should become a resident with you, on the usual terms of such accommodation?"

"Certainly," replied Edith, "but I must break the subject to my brother with all the care I can. He is longing for nothing so much as to make you some acknowledgment of his profound gratitude and admiration; and to prove the strength of these feelings by kind attentions to your mother, would be of all things in the world what he would most enjoy. Here, however, are difficulties which I know not how to overcome. But I will think a while, and perhaps I shall be able to give you tidings of success before we meet again. Can you tell me how soon that will be?"

"As early as you please," said Arnold, "for until my mother is comfortably settled, I shall know no happiness myself."

With these words Arnold took his leave, though not until he had obtained from Miss Egerton a promise that she would inform him by letter, and without delay, what was the result of her communication with her brother.

In the meantime, Edith was very busy turning over the subject in her own mind, and looking at it in a number

of different points of view, all vague, and all more or less false or exaggerated. In whatever light the subject was looked at, however, there was an insuperable difficulty standing in the way of the direct truth. It was that her brother had so long been deceived by little arts and flattering deceptions, that he was scarcely in a condition to hear the whole truth on any subject closely connected with himself, or his circumstances. He did not even know his own poverty, nor half the real expenditure of the rate at which he and his sister were living. He knew that his board was simple, and that the indulgences of both were few in comparison with their wishes; but he never for a moment suspected the system which his sister was carrying on, in relation to the publication of some little volumes of poems which he had offered to the public, and for which the public had certainly been less thankful than the publisher, whose account made a pleasant little return at the end of the year for the favour received

These, and all similar accounts, were studiously kept by Miss Egerton from her brother's knowledge. Having no taste for business, he gladly entrusted all money transactions to her, and then went on preparing a third volume of poetry, under the firm belief that the two former had been favourably, if not even flatteringly, received. Unconscious as he was of the actual straitness of their means, it would have been repugnant indeed to his delicate sensibilities, even more so than to his sister's, to have had the business of receiving a lodger laid before him. Edith absolutely dared not hint at such a thing. Besides which, she thought it was so *generous*, and so *tender*, to indulge him with the luxury of thinking he was cherishing, protecting, and even supporting, the mother of Arnold

Lee. The plan was therefore submitted to his consideration under this gratifying form; and Miss Egerton having informed Arnold that everything was satisfactorily arranged with her brother, it was not many days before Mrs. Lee became an occupant of the same dwelling, on terms which were equally reasonable and advantageous to both the parties concerned.

CHAPTER XXIV.



EARLY on a bright and cheerful morning, as Kate Staunton was passing in a somewhat businesslike manner one of the streets of M——, which led into that part of the vicinity most rich in villas and pleasant genteel residences of every description, she was startled on turning from the street into a wide public road by the rapid tread of a horse almost close upon her path, and looking round, who should the rider be but Arthur Hamilton!

Happy, and animated with his favourite exercise, and exulting in a purchase he had just made of a beautiful and spirited horse, he had seldom looked more handsome, or in better humour with himself and all the world, than on this occasion. His fine Newfoundland dog too was bounding by his side, and altogether the brisk morning air, the sunshine, the fine level road, and the high-spirited animals exulting in the liberty of going at more than usual speed, might have made even a heavier heart than that of the rider's dance with joy; and such was the expression of his countenance when he reined in his impatient steed, that Kate's for a moment reflected back the same delight, as laughingly she begged of him not quite to ride over her.

"And where upon earth can you be going at this early hour?" asked Arthur.

"I must first ask," said Kate, "what upon earth you are doing with that beautiful horse?"

"You like it, do you?" said he, patting its arched neck, and looking at it, first on one side and then on the other, with no small amount of satisfaction.

"Surely it is not your own?" said Kate.

"My own, entirely," he replied. "That is the beauty of it."

Kate looked enquiringly, but did not like to give expression to her thoughts.

"I see," said Arthur, "you want to know how I came by such a bargain. I will tell you by and by. But how far are you going?"

"Oh! a long way yet," replied Kate.

It was Arthur's turn to look inquiringly; but he felt not the same delicacy in giving expression to his thoughts, for he inquired directly the object of her going, and at what place her walk was likely to terminate. "Because," said he, "if you are not likely to turn back very soon, I could gallop on for a mile, and be with you again about this place."

"Pray gallop on," said Kate, with the utmost good humour; "but you certainly will not find me here when you return."

"Then I will not leave you until I know absolutely where you are going," said Arthur; and with that he dismounted, and, leading his horse by the bridle, walked by her side.

Rapidly and joyfully did the true heart of Kate Staunton beat at this happy moment—proud as it was happy, and full of all manner of womanly exultations; for was he

not the most admired and beloved of all created beings, who had descended from that noble animal to walk kindly beside her; and was she not his betrothed wife—free to pour out her full heart before him, to confide and be confided in, touching all things connected with the happiness of either and both? It is true Kate and her companion had of late been less communicative than usual; it is true also, that she had not yet fully disclosed her intentions with regard to leaving Hatherstone, and pursuing a more independent line of life; but now the occasion seemed most propitious for speaking of that—of everything. While looking into the bright and happy countenance of her lover, all fear had vanished from her mind; and she therefore only waited some turn in the conversation, or some allusion on his part, to enter upon that explanation which duty and inclination alike prompted her to make.

Suddenly, however, and somewhat abruptly, this eager waiting was put an end to by the falling to the ground of a parcel of books which she had been carrying under her arm, and whose pages, now fluttering in the wind, exposed themselves to view in every variety of scholastic exercise, from the conjugation of a verb, to the construction of a Latin verse.

An expression of sudden astonishment very naturally burst from the lips of Arthur Hamilton, as he stooped to gather up the scattered volumes, with a comment upon the “walking library” into which Kate had transformed herself. “But,” said he, with astonishment still more profound, as he glanced at one of the books, and then another—“What is here? and here? What *can* be the meaning of all this? Why, surely, Kate, you were not serious when you wrote to me about *going out to teach*, as they call it. It is not possible you could be so mad!”

"It is," said Kate, with a firm voice, although her face was covered with blushes, and tears were already starting to her eyes; for the consciousness of doing right does not always cover the pain, or the shame either, of incurring contempt and blame.

"You shall never do that!" exclaimed Arthur, hurling the books he had gathered up one after another over the hedge, beside which they were walking.

"Oh! Arthur!" exclaimed Kate; "do you know what you are doing? Those books are not mine, and I shall have to pay for them all if you injure them."

"*Pay!*" said her lover, in a tone of bitter sarcasm. "You think of nothing but *paying*. You are the veriest miser that ever existed, or you would never be tramping here along the public road with your arm full of books. And so, I suppose, you are a governess—my wife a governess!—married out of a situation!"

"I am a governess," said Kate, "but not your wife. And I never will be your wife, if you think me a degradation to you."

"Not to me exactly," replied Arthur, for his conscience reminded him of some things he was a little too ready to forget—"not to me, most certainly; you never can be that. But, don't you know that you are throwing yourself out of society—that you cannot visit, nor be known by any one worth knowing, now?"

"Not by you?" asked Kate, and a smile was just apparent through her tears.

"No, no; I don't mean that, of course;" said Arthur, "although I meant to have told you a pleasant little secret this morning, had not those abominable school-books driven everything that was pleasant from my mind."

"But you will help me to get them out of that field?" said Kate, now really smiling at her own dilemma.

"I don't know that I shall," said Arthur; and at the same time looking round he saw a poor man with a barrow by the side of the road. "Here! my good fellow," said he, "scramble over that fence, will you? and bring me some books that lie on the other side, and I'll give you a half-crown for your trouble."

"Put your half-crown in your pocket," said Kate, "and I'll fetch the books myself in a moment."

"What!" exclaimed Arthur, "do you grudge the poor man half-a-crown? Really, Kate, you are growing almost too stingy to be loved."

"Am I, Arthur?" said Kate—"am I really?" and then turning away her head, the tears fell plentifully down her cheeks.

"There, my good fellow," said Arthur to the man, at the same time offering the money, and feeling himself in the position of one who does a very noble and generous act. "You have well earned your pay," he added. "And now, Kate, here are your delicious volumes, of which I wish you joy."

Kate thanked him, but said no more just then; her heart was very heavy, for it seemed impossible that Arthur Hamilton should ever understand her. Perhaps he might be thinking the very same thing himself. At all events, he proposed to remount his horse; and if an unusual degree of vexation had mingled with his discovery of the purpose of Kate Staunton's early walk, it seemed all to vanish with the sensation of being well-mounted, and on his own horse.

"A beautiful creature is he not?" said he, again patting the animal's neck.

"Very beautiful," responded Kate. "Where did you meet with it?"

"Why, having a little spare money," said Arthur, "for you know, I think, that three hundred pounds have lately come into my hands, the miserable remnant of my poor father's property—having this in hand, I commissioned old Jarvy, my uncle's groom, to buy me a horse; and highly delighted he was, poor fellow, more especially when he saw how well I was pleased with his choice. By the way, I am afraid old Jarvy is in trouble.

"How so?" enquired Kate. "Has he left your uncle's service?"

"Oh, long ago," replied Arthur, "turned adrift after the great troubles came upon us all. My uncle's income, you know, is very small now, and Jarvy, and two or three other servants were obliged to be discharged."

"And what has he been doing since?" asked Kate.

"Anything he can," replied Arthur, "selling hares and rabbits sometimes, and sometimes doing nothing but starving. He and his boys live on the edge of the wood, where the ground is covered with game, and I hear they have all got into trouble for poaching. It is a thousand pities, poor fellow, that nobody would help him to an honest business, in which the family might have worked together. He used to be very kind to me when I was a naughty little boy, and often took the blame of what I did upon himself."

"How much do you think it would have required," asked Kate, "to set him up in business?"

"Perhaps thirty pounds, or forty," replied Arthur.

"Almost as much as to buy a horse," observed Kate.

Arthur looked into her face with an expression which

sufficiently assured her that for once she was perfectly understood.

"Ah! Kate," said he, "I know what you mean. But you are too severe upon me. You should remember how much pleasure I have in riding a good horse."

"I was thinking," said Kate, "of the pleasure of helping a poor man, and just then I had forgotten the pleasure of riding."

"Come, come," said he, "I am sure you will relent when you see how the horse can go;" and so saying, he struck into a gallop, his dog bounding after him, and all three looking so happy that Kate did relent so far as to feel that she could not, if the power were put into her hands, deprive him of so great an enjoyment.

Many minutes had not elapsed, however, before Arthur wheeled suddenly round, and came back again at the same speed to ask a very natural question; for it was no other than where Kate was residing, and how and when he could see her.

"Some people," said she, laughing, "would have asked that before. I am with my uncle Ashley, at his lodgings. I have a very comfortable room there, and I hope I am adding to his comfort at the same time."

"And you actually trudge out here every day on foot," said Arthur, "and teach little children to read and write?"

"I do," said Kate, "and I like both the walk and the occupation. Besides which, I have been happy in entering into this engagement with a very excellent family, where I am treated with every kindness, and as much respect as you could desire for me."

"I don't believe that," said Arthur, "but who are they?"

“Mr. and Mrs. Reynolds,” replied Kate.

“Reynolds—Reynolds?” he repeated, “rather saintly kind of people, are they not?”

“If you choose to call them so,” said Kate. “To me they seem to be quite as sincere, as they are good in every way. Mr. Reynolds is perhaps a shade too strict, and always inspires me with a kind of awe; but his wife is a very sweet lady, and the children are very pleasant to teach.”

“Every one to their taste!” said Arthur, laughing, and away he rode again, more than compensated for the humiliating circumstances in which he considered himself partially involved, by the exhilarating exercise he was just then enjoying.

In leaving the home which had been so kindly and so repeatedly offered her at Hatherstone, Kate Staunton had more than one object to pursue—more than one duty to fulfil. While residing there, some accidental reports had reached her of a nature to awaken all her former anxieties on behalf of her uncle Ashley; and much as she had all along felt for him under his accumulated trials, she now feared for him even more than she pitied him. If, however, anything could yet be done to save one who had never been very apt at saving himself, Kate knew well it could only be through the instrumentality of kindness and affection; and, forlorn and neglected as he now was, there seemed to be no other being in the world but herself to perform those friendly offices which his character and situation both rendered so necessary to his welfare.

There are sometimes fears about one's friends of such a nature as to render it almost impossible to enquire into their actual state, lest our worst apprehensions should be confirmed; and such was the feeling of Kate Staunton on

the day of her arrival at her uncle's lodgings, with the intention of sharing his home. She knew perfectly well that the woman of the house could tell her the very thing she most wished to know, and she appeared both a feeling and a good kind of person; but no—she could not—dared not ask. So long as the shadow of a doubt remained, it was something to take shelter from, and infinitely preferable to the laying bare of the truth. Thus Kate asked no questions, nor even conversed in such a manner as to draw out information unasked. She found the good woman anxious and perplexed, but very much relieved by the intelligence that she was herself intending to become a constant inmate in the house. One observation especially caught her ear. "It is a thousand pities," said the woman, "that a nice gentleman, such as Mr. Ashley seems to *have been*, should be left so by his own family."

"My uncle is an excellent-hearted man," responded Kate.

"The more's the pity!" sighed the woman; and nothing more was said.

But if these, and similar expressions, fell upon the anxious ear of Kate Staunton like faint warnings of what was yet to come, the appearance of her uncle when he walked into the room, pleased as he was to see his niece again, and affectionate as was the cordial greeting and explanation which followed, still his appearance was such as might well have made a stout heart sink to see him.

There needs no description of such an appearance. The stranger's eye might pass it by unnoticed; but the eye of love, of true and noble love, knows it too well; and such eyes have had to look upon it in a father, a husband, a brother, nay, even in a wife, and beyond this, in a mother! Neither age, nor sickness, nor harrowing care, nor poverty,

present an appearance at all like it. Age is not so imbecile, sickness is not so revolting, harrowing care is not so hideous, nor abject poverty so degrading. The quick eye of Kate Staunton beheld it in a moment, and knew its meaning; but, for all that, she did not altogether wish herself away. It might be distressing to be always near him. It might be even worse than distressing; but who would fill that post of duty if she did not? "And, perhaps," said she, "I may be of some service to him yet. It never was in his nature to stand alone; and he was hardly dealt with by his own family."

In this manner Kate went on making excuses for her uncle, until all her feelings seemed to resolve themselves into a sensation of intense pity. For her *that* was always enough. She could do or suffer almost anything when her compassion was strongly excited; and none knew better than herself what the poor weak-spirited, down-stricken man had had to suffer through many years of his past life.

The delight which Mr. Ashley manifested on beholding his niece, and learning what were her plans with regard to himself, appeared at first to be as deep as it was sincere; but it was in reality only a puerile kind of joy, in comparison with the effort of principle it would necessarily cost her to carry out those plans to their full extent. That she had lost a little of the power which she once possessed over her uncle, was also painfully evident, for before the expiration even of the first evening they spent together, he began to look at his watch, and to talk of going out for an hour; and on being playfully questioned by his niece as to the business which seemed so very pressing, he pleaded having an appointment with a friend which would not detain him long.

For the first evening, however, Kate had succeeded in detaining her uncle at home, though evidently much against his inclination; for he was restless, absent, and moody all the evening, and not in the very best temper with herself. All which contributed to make the picture of her present lot, now darkening upon her, one which required all her fortitude, and all her benevolence, to enable her to contemplate. Action, however, was as usual her best friend; for although she very naturally cried herself to sleep on the first night spent in her new home, she had to rise early in the morning, to walk a great distance, and to enter into all the practical details of her new engagement as a daily governess.

The first experience of Kate Staunton in this occupation was very widely at variance with those pictures of hardship and contumely which abound both in reality and fiction. It was her happiness to have become associated with a family who could afford to pay every reasonable mark of respect and attention to the instructress of their children; who regarded her on all points, except where money was concerned, as entirely their equal, and therefore were delicate and careful on that, lest in anything they should offend, or give pain.

This family were, as Kate had described them, rather stricter in their views on some subjects than the society with which she had hitherto associated, and it was not long before she discovered that they occupied a high and influential place in what is called the religious world; that they were in fact looked up to as patterns in all things right and seemly; and, perfectly conscious themselves of this distinction, that they were consequently hemmed in within a narrower compass than their generous hearts would often have dictated, by the dread of doing anything

which persons of weaker principle, or *lower standing*, would take advantage of, and thus abuse their example.

In conversations in which their own actions, and those of their neighbours, were discussed under this point of view, Kate was often present; and she soon made another discovery, that her own conduct must be subjected to the same rule; for anything touching her respectability, or even her propriety of thought and character, must inevitably touch their good name through her. Often, and often, did Mrs. Reynolds, who possessed the softer heart, sigh over the necessity of not yielding to its kinder and warmer dictates; but she generally comforted herself in a more than proportionate degree, by speaking of the distinguished position which her husband held in this particular circle, of how much he was looked up to by others, and how likely it was that some, especially the young and inexperienced, might be led astray by mistaking his motives, if he should deviate in the slightest degree from the only line of conduct which he had found it safe to pursue.

After spending her days in such an atmosphere, it was not only a humiliating, but at times a very alarming transition to Kate, to return to her uncle's lodgings, and to share her evenings with a person of his habits. Unshared with him, however, her evenings were still more painful and distressing; for she had not been long with him before she learned what the nature of those habits was, though still in some measure ignorant of their extent.

It was now very seldom indeed that Mr. Ashley spent his evenings at home. The woman of the house at last spoke out, and told the place to which he was accustomed to resort, and the condition in which he generally returned. It was a low place to which he repaired under the pre-

tence of reading the daily papers, but where he met with a few fallen men like himself, and some too low to fall, who propped up his broken spirit with the fond belief that he was a sort of favourite, chief, or king, amongst them; and who flattered him by assurances that they could not meet with any pleasure when he was absent. In this manner his slender salary became rapidly diminished; for the evenings were seldom far spent before his notions of the rights of property had become so confused as to render him totally indifferent what amount of payment came out of his own purse. Indeed, it was the grand triumph of his kind and generous heart to pay for all; and consequently the rent of his lodgings remained to his landlady in a very unsatisfactory state.

So soon as Kate Staunton made this discovery, and it was not very long in being introduced to her notice, she determined to seize the first lucid moment to enter with her uncle into a serious examination of the state of his finances. The thousand pounds left by her grandfather she knew to be his by right, but to this she had no doubt but he had resigned all claim in favour of his wife and daughters. Perhaps they might be disposed to assist him so far as to set him free from his most pressing debts; but how could she ask such a thing without exposing what she could never bring her mind to lay before them—merciless and unsparing as she knew they would be in their manner of treating his failings and transgressions.

“No, no,” said Kate, “I would rather pay the whole amount myself, whatever it may be;” and with this determination she induced her uncle to stay at home one evening, and actually compelled him to look with her into the state of his accounts, bearing all the while his remonstrances against her hardness and cruelty, and even

the comparison of her own character with that of his wife and daughters, who had always been *against him*. Everybody was against him, he said; and the niece he had loved so was only come to insult and degrade him, and perhaps to thrust him into prison for debt.

It is often observed of insanity, that it converts love into hate, and poisons the once fond heart with dislike and suspicion against those who have been its greatest comfort and delight. But there is a worse insanity—a madness more to be dreaded, in which the same peculiarity is not less frequent; in which the patient suffering wife is often the mark for bitterness, outrage, and cruelty; the friend of early life is first deceived, then hated, and shunned; and all who would save while they serve, are repelled with insult, malignity, and scorn.

Under such an insanity the gentlest and the kindest spirit may become violent, vindictive, and bitter. And it was with such a spirit that Kate Staunton had now associated herself. Instead of the parent and protector whom she had hoped to find in her uncle, he was, in his best moods, weak and wavering as a child; in his worst, such as she had never dreamed of beholding him, nor would even now have described him to any being upon earth.

What was the probability of a man in this situation being really assisted or made better by a girl like Kate? She dared not ask herself the question; and yet the thought of leaving him without a fair trial of what could be done, was infinitely more hopeless and more painful.

With this feeling strengthened by the ever-present conviction, that if she forsook him, no one else in the world would stand by him, or take up his cause, Kate determined as the first step of duty, to set about the adjustment of his pecuniary affairs, and the payment of what honourable

debts he had contracted, out of her own means. On this point she was not *stingy*, as her lover had so lately called her; nor did she shrink from the investigation, nor try to throw the blame of debts incurred upon others rather than herself; but nobly threw her whole heart into the business, experiencing no other reward than that to which the feelings of woman are peculiarly sensitive—the satisfaction of shrouding a name beloved from open condemnation and shame.

CHAPTER XXV.



PERHAPS there never was a human heart which remained through a long life untried in its tenderest part;—in the yielding of its affections, or in its tendency to kindness and generosity, rather than to malignity or pure selfishness. It is not merely that

the natural claims of relationship are presented to all; but beyond these, there are stages of human life in which claims of a more casual and accidental nature might seem almost as if introduced for the especial purpose of testing the kindly feelings of our nature—of making us better and happier if attended to—harder, colder, and more miserable, if rejected.

Of all human beings, it is probable that Mr. Dalrymple the engineer had been least troubled by claims of this nature, or least honoured and privileged to feel them; for the trouble or the privilege is exactly proportioned to the disposition in which they are met. And yet even this hard and isolated man could look back to some one or two halting-places in his experience, when it might have done his heart a world of good, had he chosen to listen to the gentle hints conveyed to him through the most unobtrusive of channels—hints that even for him, if he chose to

partake of it, there was spread the rich feast of doing good—the luxury of helping a fellow-creature at a season of sore and urgent need.

A very important crisis was now about arriving in the busy life-time of this busy man—a time when he would have leisure for taking breath, and even for looking back, if he chose to amuse himself with an occupation so new to his experience. Hitherto his looking had been all in the opposite direction. He shunned as much as he hated the backward view; for all the meanness and the obscurity of his life lay that way—all its dignity and distinction the other.

But even without the slightest *inclination* to look back, there are times when the necessity is laid upon us to do so; and no sooner does the man of business place himself in prosperous circumstances, than in the midst of cushioned ease and indolence, behold the past comes up before him like the sudden opening of a landscape to the traveller's view; no sooner does the ambitious man surmount the difficulties which obstructed his onward and upward career, and find himself exulting in success, than lo! the same picture comes up before him also, presenting often to his unwilling sight "what once he was."

Whether it was that the great object on which the hopes of Mr. Dalrymple had lately been fixed was now so near being attained, that he had less necessity for unremitting exertion, or whether so comfortable an addition had already been made to his means of enjoyment, that he deemed it no longer unsafe or unwise to live a little more like other men; but certain it was, that he now indulged in a little after-dinner indolence. He now even took his wine, as he sat beside his solitary table; and when that meal was over, and when not disposed to read,

or having no book that he liked, for he had not gone so far as to dream of subscribing to a library, he would sit on cold wintry days, with one foot on each side of his narrow fire-place; and with his head thrown back and resting upon his chair behind, would sleep when he could for the space of half-an-hour, and when he could not, would employ the same amount of time in thinking, for the most part, of the golden future which he now fancied he could dimly descry in his horizon; but at other times, and only when he could not help it, of the cold grey earthy past, in which no green spot of verdure could be seen, in which no tender sweet or beautiful flower had ever bloomed.

Upon the whole it was a great relief to Mr. Dalrymple to have got rid of his daughter—in other words, to know that she was so eligibly married, and altogether off his hands. If on some occasions, and especially of late, she had awakened in his mind sensations of admiration and respect, these feelings were so entirely at variance with the repose of a parent's natural affection, as to occasion more uneasiness than satisfaction; and particularly at his own fireside, the companionship of his daughter was almost the last he would have desired; for there was a quickness of perception about her, a restlessness under solitude and inaction, which, in her obscure and humble home, had rendered her anything but an easy and quiet inmate, and even the very watchfulness of her large dark eyes, to one who hated to be watched, had often driven him away from her society at home.

With his sister, Miss Dalrymple, he had more feelings in common. Both intensely selfish, they could perfectly understand each other. Both having gone through the great struggle of life—of *mere* life, unaided and unloved, both could sit down on the same conditions at the same

fireside, and scarcely feel sensible that they were not alone.

At present, however, even this faint representation of a fellow-being was not offering any claim to the personal consideration of her brother. Miss Dalrymple had been invited to superintend the household arrangements at Dorothy's new home, preparatory to the return of the *happy couple* from the wedding tour; and here it was that Aunt Anne was rejoicing in the midst of splendour and luxury, with almost as much felicity as if she had been the bride herself.

But to return to the engineer, and to ask—"Of what is the *old* man thinking?"—for already there are shreds of grey—nay almost of white intermingling with the locks which curl around his handsome forehead, and which hold no inconsiderable share in those charms which recommend him wherever he goes as a fine-looking gentlemanly man. Old Bridget has come in to lay an additional coal upon the fire. Like a piece of old family furniture, she helps to recall to his mind some circumstances long since past, and he asks her, in a musing, dreamy sort of way, if she has any recollection of Jane Hepburn.

Pleased at being spoken to by her master, and feeling as if at last emerging from the obscurity into which she had been thrown by the introduction of a new hand-maid into the family, Bridget began to wipe her hands upon her apron, and to make other preliminary signs towards settling into a long confidential chat. But her slight affirmative response was answered by a sharp "very well; that will do;" so well understood on the part of the old servant, that in spite of her strong desire to prolong the conversation, she was obliged to tear herself away from this unwonted and unlooked for chance of making herself

agreeable, just stopping at the door, however, to ask her master if he wanted anything else, to which he answered still more imperatively—"No."

This same Jane Hepburn was a person who sometimes troubled Mr. Dalrymple's mind; and yet she was the last person to wish to trouble his or any other mind. Under her maiden name of Stanley, she had once occupied the same dwelling with the now successful and prosperous engineer. He was a poor apprentice then, and she was a mere child; but she used to creep beside him when he was elbowed out of the family circle; and what was more, she used to save him many of the sweet-gifts, and other niceties of the table bestowed upon herself; for she knew not, in her infantine simplicity, why the apprentice was not entitled to food equal to that of the master's family with whom he was associated.

Jane's father, however, was a hard man of the old school, who thought that inclination perpetually thwarted was finally destroyed. He should have tried the experiment upon his own appetite, whether food which he did not like, or no food at all, would cure him of wishing for it good. He was also one who conscientiously believed that a boy in the family was a thing to be legitimately treated as a scape-goat to all the household, a mark at which all might shoot forth their passion or their spleen, at the same time that it held no right to remonstrate nor power to rebel. Little Jane thought differently, or rather being too young to think, and not much encouraged to do so, she *felt* differently, and found many opportunities of acting as she felt.

The poor apprentice, for very poor he was, and therefore justly entitled as his master thought to be put down, kept down, and even trampled down, as need might be,

was less apparently grateful for the services of his little handmaid than might have been expected. Yet still he was grateful in his way; but altogether the experience of his youth was of that description which blights every finer impulse of the soul, and concentrates all emotions into the one ruling passion of self-interest. That of his sister had been no better. Her heart had expanded only to be nipped and blighted; and thus she also learned the same lesson, and her kindly feelings too turned inward and grew into herself.

It was strange with so small a sense of gratitude, how often the recollections of the apprentice in his after life had turned upon his little friend Jane Stanley. Even in his married state, for in all probability he never dreamed of marrying her, he had said to his servant Bridget, about once a year or so, exactly what he said on the occasion already described, "Bridget, do you remember little Jane Stanley?" Only in process of time the name had changed, and then it was a very great event for Bridget to have to narrate, that Jane Stanley had become Jane Hepburn; and when her master very naturally asked who Hepburn was, she could answer that he was a seafaring man who went much to foreign parts, and spent very little of his time at home.

Still more important seemed to be the intelligence which Bridget had a short time after this to report; and then she actually began of herself, not waiting for her master's old familiar enquiry; for the very same individual—the identical Jane Hepburn—had actually taken a house in the town of M——, and, more wonderful still, it was the very house adjoining that in which resided the engineer himself. Not that the tenement occupied by the wife and the child of the seafaring man bore any

proportion to Mr. Dalrymple's, with its range of offices, and garden containing actual walks, and shrubberies, and trees. Instead of this, it was a narrow house, one of a long row; and hers was close by the side of the office, her narrow strip of garden extending along the low wall which formed the boundary of his on that side. And here it was that the peaceful, quiet-spirited wife, for the greatest portion of her life as lonely as a widow, used to cultivate a few flowers and evergreens, until she had another flower to cultivate, in a fine, lively child, that seemed to be the joy and life-spring of her whole existence.

Mr. Dalrymple never was addicted to any kind of fondness for children, and no doubt he was very thankful that the window of his own office was so far elevated above the garden, that no sound of laughter or screaming ever reached his ear from the narrow strip of garden, except only when little Master Hepburn was more than usually vehement in his cries. Thus the cold man of plans and measurements—of schemes, and far extending and ambitious views, could sit in peace in his high chamber, sometimes looking almost unconsciously down upon the patient, loving mother; and as an office-clerk might watch a sparrow feeding its young in the crevices of some black chimney, yet all the while pursue his wonted task, so he watched the growth and play of that young child beneath his mother's care, yet never once allowed any impulse or emotion which either could call forth, for an instant to interrupt the accustomed routine of his thoughts and occupations.

If, however, he was able to see, and even to watch the mother and the child without thinking of them, he was not able to miss them in the same way; for on one occasion,

after seeing the garden walks untrodden, the flowers untended, and the whole place apparently vacated for some days, he plied old Bridget with his wonted question, and received, instead of her accustomed answer, the sad intelligence that the father of little Hepburn had been lost at sea.

It was a long time after this intelligence before any living thing could be seen from the high window moving in the little strip of garden. At last a quiet figure, clad in mourning-weeds, moved slowly up and down, but took no notice of the opening flowers, though spring had come again. As time passed on, however, the flowers again were tended, the weeds were rooted up, the scattered leaves were raked away; but now no gardener's hand was ever called to help. The widow herself performed the necessary labour, and often could be seen from the high window contending with some obstinate bough too strong for her to conquer, or with some heavy load, bending beneath its weight as if she had grown prematurely old and feeble. And yet she was a very lovely woman, or looked so in the distance; and the boy was beautiful—a laughter-loving, merry-hearted, rosy fellow, the very personification of gleesome health and buoyancy of soul. And thus he grew, and laughed, and loved his mother, and was her all on earth.

High as the office window was—low as that little garden lay beneath, it was not difficult to conjecture that the widow must be very poor. There were symptoms of poverty as time passed on in the peculiar tint upon her old mourning gown, and in the care with which the boy was fitted out for school, and again disrobed to run in the little garden after he came home. And yet in all probability the idea never once presented itself to the mind of

the engineer, that a Christmas present might have been sent in for his neighbour's child without harm either to the receiver or the giver.

As years passed on, the boy grew stout and manly, until, it might be his fourteenth or more, when one day, with his mother's hand in his, they might be seen going out of the little garden together, and as they closed the gate, both looking up to the high office-window, as if they actually contemplated an assault upon that citadel. And so it was. A gentle tap at the lower door—a gruff “Come in”—a gentle voice inquiring for Mr. Dalrymple, and then the widow and the handsome boy were in his presence, the former looking much abashed, the latter far more curious than shy.

How much did Mr. Dalrymple at that moment wish they had not come. He did not like to be compelled to pity any one, still less to be compelled to help them; and the widow looked so poor, and yet so sweet—so mild and patient. An air of blended dignity and delicacy too was so conspicuous in her form and movements, that he dreaded she was come to ask some favour which he should want the power or courage to refuse.

“I dare say,” the widow began, with a peculiar smile, “you have no recollection of such a being as Jane Stanley?”

Mr. Dalrymple answered that he had, and that he also was aware of her own identity with that individual.

A faint blush stole over the widow's face as he said this, and many different emotions seemed to crowd upon her, until her lips quivered so that she could not speak; for she had known many sorrows, and her heart was full. Yet withal, there might be something like a touch of wounded pride, that her identity had been so long known and not acknowledged.

To speak, or even to think of herself, was however not the widow's business, and by a strong effort she put away the many recollections, for the single purpose of her visit, which she then entered upon fully, and explained how her boy had a peculiar turn and talent for the business in which Mr. Dalrymple was engaged; how he was never idle when a pencil could be had, but always drawing, planning, building, or constructing something; and then she showed some little sketches—"highly creditable," Mr. Dalrymple said. And thus she ventured on, and on—for a mother's love can make the faint heart bold—and thus she came at last to tell her all-absorbing wish, that Mr. Dalrymple would take the youth into his office, and let him work and learn with him. Nor was her proposition purely one of favour on the one hand, of charity on the other. She had a slender sum, the careful hoardings of many luxuries curtailed, and this she offered frankly and without reserve, with all her high and honourable feelings urging her to do so.

Mr. Dalrymple ominously shook his head. He had a thousand reasons why he could not—positively *could* not admit the youth upon such terms. He was sorry that he could not, more sorry than words could well describe. It gave him real pain. But was there nothing else? He should have thought the sea——

The mother's eyes were filling with hot tears. "Go, child," she said, "into the adjoining room, and I will call for you."

"I should have thought the sea," the engineer repeated in the same cold tone.

"Sir," said the widow, and in the earnestness of her appeal she laid her small white hand upon his arm; the last time they had come in contact it was smaller far than

now, but not so white and thin—"Sir," she repeated still more earnestly, "you do not know what you are saying. His father died at sea!"

Mr. Dalrymple nodded, as much as to say, he was quite aware of that fact.

"My child," she continued, "has naturally a horror for the sea."

"Indeed?" said the engineer, with some surprise, "I should have rather taken him for a fine, bold-spirited fellow. He does not look like a coward, madam."

"Coward!" repeated the mother, while a deep blush, not of shame, but of indignation, suffused her face. "My boy is far indeed from being a coward; but surely he may shrink from commencing thus early the same dreary course in which his father perished, without glory, without reward, without"—she burst into tears, and could say no more, until time had been gained for the control of those emotions, not indeed too frequently indulged.

"I suppose, then," she said, as soon as she recovered strength enough to speak, "there is nothing to be hoped for in this quarter for my son?"

"Nothing," replied Mr. Dalrymple, and he spoke hastily and firmly; for a most unusual sensation about the region of the heart made him actually fear that he should be overcome, and that for once in his life his better feelings would obtain the mastery over those which formed the uniform tendency of his habits.

On receiving this short and very definitive reply, the widow called her son out of the adjoining room. She had brought with her a large portfolio with some of his more finished drawings to exhibit as credentials in his favour; but they were of no use now.

"James," said she, "Mr. Dalrymple cannot give us any

hope. He, like many of your friends, recommends the sea."

The boy had come in with conscious happy face, his fine eyes resting on the portfolio, which was justly the pride of his heart; but when he heard this sentence it was too much for him, and leaning his head upon his mother's shoulder, he sobbed aloud.

"Hush! my love," said the widow. "This will not do here. The fact is," she continued, addressing Mr. Dalrymple, "he has an uncle very capable of furthering his interests in the seafaring line, and he hears a great deal of persuasion on this side of the question; but his heart is not in it, poor fellow! and it seems a hard thing to me to push him off from me, as one may say, and from everything he loves and delights in, to trust his precious life to the winds and waves. He is all I have, sir—all I have left in the wide world."

"Most high-spirited boys," replied Mr. Dalrymple, "are only too fond of the sea."

"He does not want spirit," said the fond mother, and a glance of lightning from the indignant boy confirmed her words.

"Ah, well!" said Mr. Dalrymple, rising from his seat, and rubbing his hands, as if the next thing he intended to do was to open the door—"no doubt he will like the sea better in the course of a year or so; and then there's the amusement of seeing foreign countries, of studying men and manners, and of bringing home information to his friends."

All this was said with the utmost complaisance; and as each item of undeniable advantage was added, a low bow advanced the widow and her child a little nearer to the door; and then a little nearer to the head of the stairs;

where a still more polite "good morning" wound up their business with Mr. Dalrymple for ever.

Silently, and very mournfully, the widow retraced her steps. For some minutes the boy was silent too; but just as they reached the gate of their little strip of garden, he looked up at the high office window, and clenching his fist, exclaimed, "You stingy old rascal. I only wish, mother, I had struck him in the face."

Of course the mother was exceedingly shocked, and she faithfully remonstrated with her son upon the impropriety, not of his language only, but still more of his thoughts and feelings. But although such remonstrances were often repeated, and although full acknowledgment was made of the ungentlemanly nature of such expressions, nothing ever seemed to convince the boy that he and his mother had not been ill-treated by a selfish and avaricious man.

For a long time after this interview, Mr. Dalrymple carefully abstained from mentioning the widow's name, even to his servant; nor did he look from his office-window to see the pale mother in her garden, with the handsome boy by her side, as had so long been his custom. Once he fancied there was something like a departure, but would not ask particulars of any one; and then again he thought the widow must be dead, the garden looked so overgrown with weeds, and all things seemed so desolate and forsaken. But no, she was still there. In the course of a few weeks he caught a glimpse of her slender figure rushing out at the postman's ring, and taking from his hand a packet—how precious!

Soon after this, the garden was a little put in order, but slowly, and as it seemed without either hope or pleasure in the occupation. And so the monotonous weeks

and months rolled on, during which Mr. Dalrymple had other things to do and think about; far different from watching a poor and lonely woman in her humble avocations.

It was about this time that there occurred that crisis in his affairs which has already been described, and which, with the secret exultations it awakened, and the occupation it afforded both to head and hand, might naturally be supposed to drive from his mind all former considerations, bearing no reference to that important personage—himself.

But not until success had in some measure crowned the efforts which the engineer had been compelled to make in order to retain the position to which he had somewhat suddenly been raised, did he find a little breathing-time again. It was not, in fact, until the advantageous marriage of his daughter, upon which every one so warmly congratulated him, that he allowed himself opportunity to think and to enjoy repose like other men. That great fact accomplished, he felt comparatively at ease. To him it was just another stepping-stone upon the steep ascent which he was climbing. A position gained for his daughter was the next thing to a position gained for himself; and was not that already dimly seen in the distance, like the blue line of land long sought by the storm-tossed and bewildered mariner?

It had been a part of Mr. Dalrymple's policy to place the seal of secrecy, so far as it was possible to do so, upon his own transactions, until the stepping-stone already alluded to should be passed; and it was the more easy to accomplish this purpose, because the scene of his success lay in a very distant part of the country. Thus in the town of M—— he was still the unpaid, hard-working, self-denying engineer, bemoaning himself perpetually when

anything had to be paid for, about money long since due but difficult to obtain. Indeed, no one could be apparently more destitute of immediate resources, until the marriage of his daughter set him free from all further risk of being compelled to expend upon her something like a marriage-portion. However small this might have been, either in expectation or demand, it would still have been just so much more than the father intended to advance. He had consequently gone, as he said, to the utmost extent in her outfit, and general preparation; and for this, he shook his head and hinted how difficult it would be for him to make up by future economy and labour the amount expended.

No sooner, however, was the advantageous marriage actually solemnized, than the mind of the prudential parent became a little perplexed, as to the manner in which it would now be possible for him to blaze out upon the public as a prosperous and substantial man. And yet where was the benefit of being such a man, unless the public knew it. What was wealth to him as a mere tangible and material good? He wanted no luxuries, cared for no pleasures. They were considerations he had held in utter contempt, through the greatest portion of his life; and such was the natural effect of habit upon his constitution both of mind and body, that to begin to enjoy himself now after the fashion of mankind in general, would be as irksome to his temper, as unpalatable to his tastes.

It was after pondering these subjects in his mind, in a somewhat idle, after-dinner mood, that he asked of old Bridget the simple but once familiar question which has already been recorded—"Do you recollect Jane Hepburn?"

It so happened, however, this time that Bridget had really something to tell him, only that the shortness of his manner when he said to her "That will do," made her almost determine to keep him unacquainted with her intelligence, as a just punishment for having nipped the pleasant intercourse which she seemed to be anticipating in the bud. For that moment Bridget closed the door in dudgeon; but soon returned on some pretence into the room, and while wiping off with her apron the dust which had accumulated on a table by the door, said in a tone of perfect indifference—"Maybe you don't know what happened to that poor widow after she sent her boy to sea?"

"What happened to *her*?" said Mr. Dalrymple. "I don't think anything has happened to her. I see her still in her garden, just as she used to be, only I wish she would dress like other people. I am weary of that old rusty black of hers. It makes a dark speck in my sight whenever I look out of the office window."

Bridget gave utterance to a deep sigh. The habiliments of mourning were always as sad to her as the events on account of which they were worn, at all events they were far more touching and picturesque; and after all, is not human sympathy for the most part made up out of the touching and the picturesque, more than the really calamitous?

"But did anything really happen to that poor lonely creature?" asked Mr. Dalrymple, with more feeling in his tone and manner than his enquiries were wont to convey.

Bridget turned round, and with one hand resting on her side, and the other folded in the corner of her apron, ready to wipe off any tears that might be called into her eyes, she began her story thus:—

"Why, deary me, sir, we've all known it—everybody's

known it but yourself. That fine rosy youth that used to run about as wild as a young colt—he never came back from his first voyage, and he never will come back now, I dare be bound to say; inasmuch as the savages ate him, sir—there's no doubt about that, sir, they ate him, the cannibals did. Some say the scalp was sent home to his mother, but I am not here to certify to that."

"What are you talking about, Bridget?" said her master, looking round as if uneasy under the strange and horrible, yet indistinct impressions she was making on his hitherto careless ear. "Do cease from that stupid gibberish of yours, and tell me in plain terms what you mean."

"Why, sir," said the poor woman, commencing afresh, "I did hear it was all in the papers—printed, word for word."

"Not in your words, I should think," observed Mr. Dalrymple; but as this was uttered in an under tone, Bridget went on.

"The first notion I had of anything being wrong, was one day when I had watched a letter given in—and, dear me, poor thing! to be sure I never shall forget how she did wring her hands, and cry. And then for days and weeks after that, she used to meet the postman every morning out upon the road; and, worse and worse—for Mason, that goes sometimes to make the poor thing's bits of mourning up, told me that when the whole truth came out it was clear the poor boy had been killed by savages out somewhere—nobody knows where—only that the captain of the ship wrote home all particulars—and a horrible account it was, Mason said, enough to make her blood run cold—much more the mother's, that loved him so; and he so beautiful, and she no other in the wide

world to comfort her. Oh! sir, if any Christian body would have taken that poor boy, and put him to an honest trade, and never let him go to sea!"

"Go away about your own business," said the engineer, "I want to be alone."

Bridget obeyed her master, but no sooner was he left alone, than he would gladly have called his servant back again, so irksome was the burden of his own thoughts when there was nothing to beguile him of their bitterness. Restless and uncomfortable he knew not what ailed him. An illness he thought must soon be coming on, so new and strange were his sensations. He must get rid of them in some way or other, so he rushed into his office, and sat no more musing after dinner for many days after that time.

To the quick perceptions of Mr. Dalrymple it soon became evident that if he desired to rise in the world according to the usual manner of rising, as esteemed and aimed at by society, he must not only manage so as to accumulate wealth, but he must spend wealth, as well as possess it. This was a very serious consideration to one who had not naturally the least taste for spending, and who had not tried the experiment sufficiently to imbibe an artificial taste for it, as a mere luxury. Not that the world required of him to spend his substance in charity. His feelings were not tested so far as that. The necessity laid upon him in the pursuit of his one great object, was that he should live differently, make more display of wealth acquired, and so maintain in the public mind a belief that he had wealth in store, as well as yet to come.

All this was very disagreeable to the engineer, but it was not so bad as giving to the poor. It was very disagreeable, because troublesome and unnecessary. Why,

if the world was supremely fond of wealth, did it not worship gold in its simple substance and primitive form. Or why might he not go about in society claiming the homage of men and women with a golden collar round his neck, or a golden burden on his back? Either would have been less irksome in the present instance, than deliberately setting about to make a figure in society; and yet he doubted whether either or both could procure for him the object upon which his heart was set.

Again, there were difficulties in the upward road he was contemplating, which it seemed impossible for him to surmount. Dorothy would have helped him over some of these, but she was gone—*well* gone, and the father's heart was abundantly consoled.

Amongst these difficulties, the greatest was an establishment, and truly that was a mountain. Himself and his servant Bridget had hitherto constituted the entire props of the house of Dalrymple. Betsy Burton had given it a transient support, but she was now gone to the villa, to fill a place of still greater importance there. Certainly, nothing could be made of old Bridget as an elementary material in practising the art of rising; and the master himself, in a domestic point of view, was a subject almost equally hopeless.

Days, weeks, and months passed over, and the machinery of the engineer's ambition seemed almost to have ceased to work, purely from the want of materials to work upon. It was, as before observed, becoming evident to his quick, searching eye, that unless some very important change could be made, the machine must stop. Already he could perceive symptoms of being overlooked amongst mankind—forgotten, allowed to fall through, while the ranks of busy, eager, and important men closed over him.

Yet what was to be done? He stood alone; and therefore it was that he began to sink. He had not breadth of foundation enough to keep him up. He had nothing to show of all his gains, which mankind might see and examine, as the genuine credentials of a prosperous, and consequently a praiseworthy man. He must ally himself to something—that was clear. Already he had taken some preliminary steps towards admitting Arthur Hamilton into a kind of partnership in transactions of business; he must now look out for a domestic partner capable of adding to his weight and influence in that department.

To the shame of his gallantry, it must be acknowledged that this expedient was less agreeable to Mr. Dalrymple than any other to which his imagination turned as a resource; and yet his judgment deliberately and repeatedly rejected all but this. It was the only peg on which it was possible to hang a single hope. He was a doomed man, for he must either do this or sink.

It was very natural in connection with his other characteristics that Mr. Dalrymple should possess a stiff kind of pride, which made him hate to be ridiculous. For this reason he studiously avoided placing himself in any public situation, at once both new and doubtful. In all his business transactions he had sought and found the able patronage of wealthy and influential men, so that while labouring to appropriate the fame of what might prove successful, he laboured still more to escape the disgrace of what might fail. After a life of such mystery and reserve as he had practised, such utter incommunicativeness as to his own private feelings or affairs—was such a man to come forward now and make himself a public spectacle for a woman, and for nothing more? No; Mr. Dalrymple was too prudent for that. It was just

that *something more* which was to prompt, sustain, and justify the act before the eyes of all the world. However absurd the intermediate steps might appear either to himself or to others, the final move in this game of life would have a golden apology, the efficiency of which none would presume to dispute.

The only alternative remaining for Mr. Dalrymple now was to put a good face upon the matter, and go out into society to seek a wife. Happily for his purpose, the face which nature had given him was no trifling recommendation in this pursuit; his figure too was tall and well proportioned; and when he did condescend to trifle, or to mix himself up with the gossip of an evening party, it was so rare a circumstance, that people scarcely knew whether to be most astonished or amused at so unaccountable a change.

At that turn in his affairs, when the clever engineer began to be known in society as a successful and rising man, he commenced this new career; and had he been ticketed *rich*, as well as handsome, he could scarcely have been received wherever he went with a more cordial or flattering welcome. He even began to think, for the first time in his life, that surely he must be a wit, so ready was the laugh which awaited his utterance of anything exhibiting the most distant approach to pleasantry. Dry enough, most assuredly, had been all the sayings and doings of Mr. Dalrymple in society until this period of his life; but now the whole world was not more changed to him, than he was changed to the world. So much so, that even ladies began to approach him with a certain kind of interest; and had he known the least what to make of it, or how to turn their kindness to account, there is little doubt but he might have been quite a pet

amongst them before long. As it was, there were many old ladies who, in the presence of their daughters, pronounced him young; and even young ones ready to declare in his hearing, that no gentleman could be really handsome until his hair was grey.

But Mr. Dalrymple, though quick on all other subjects, proved himself most egregiously stupid here. Of all the delicate little compliments scattered about in his path, he saw but few, and appropriated fewer still. His object was not to be admired and courted as a ladies' man, and be compelled to admire and pay court to others in return; it was simply to get himself married to a rich wife, and have done with such folly for ever. Little fancy, therefore, had the prosperous engineer, as he walked about in society, for the smiles of the young, or the flattery of the old. It was all moonshine to him, and it left as little impression where it fell.

"But, surely," said he, while communing with himself, "there must be some rich woman amongst them who knows how to give good dinners, and all that sort of thing, who knows, in short, exactly what I do not, and would take all the trouble of an establishment off my hands, without expending too much upon it either."

Now there dwelt in the town of M——, a certain Mrs. Patten, a widow lady of sublime dimensions, whose property had many suitors, not unwilling to admit the widow herself as an item necessarily connected with their suit. The lady possessed few advantages of education beyond the common observation of human life, as exhibited in general society; and in personal charms she was still more deficient. Considerably advanced in years, and wanting one eye, there were still many persons to be found who declared her good-looking; there were some who quoted

her expressions, and pronounced them full of point; and still more who found no parties so charming as those at Mrs. Patten's.

Altogether the poor woman herself had been so beset with admirers—had been so “flattered, followed, sought, and sued”—had heard such barefaced and unflinching declarations that she was handsome, graceful, and young; and these not in the way of ridicule, or from the trifling and impertinent, but from grave and respectable persons whose word was accepted in all other points, that she first grew to disbelieve her own senses, and then her looking-glass, and so on with every other truthful witness, until at last she came to regard herself as quite a tender sort of interesting little creature, to be cherished and cared for as if she had been fifteen instead of fifty.

It was no fault of Mrs. Patten's that she thought herself always in a precarious state of health, and beyond all calculation susceptible of cold. People had shuddered when she coughed, and run for shawls to wrap her up, and shut doors and windows to keep her from the drafts, and kept so many messengers going to and fro enquiring after her colds, that she must have possessed a strength of mind beyond the average portion of her sex, not to have been in time deluded into the belief that her life, suspended by a thread, was more precious, and yet in greater peril, than that of any other human being.

Mr. Dalrymple had heard much of Mrs. Patten before being admitted to the privilege of her acquaintance; or rather he had heard much of her house, of her dinners, and above all of her possessions. Some men, under his circumstances, might have been curious about the lady herself; but on this point he asked no questions. His resolution was formed without his knowledge, perhaps

more quickly than it would have been with it; and he only required the introduction of a friend, to place himself before the lady's notice. This was soon accomplished; and although had his daughter been present at the first interview, she might have detected her father wheeling suddenly round, and biting his thin lip as if afraid that his resolution would give way; there was no one on that occasion who disturbed the agreeable impressions of either party by a single word or look, tending to the disparagement of the lady's charms.

The engineer must have been dull indeed, had he not soon become aware of the fact, that of all the widow's admirers he was himself the most admired; and that the way to her especial favour would not be difficult for him to find. Still there is a wide difference betwixt being thought agreeable in company, and being accepted as a lover; and the important question was not so easily introduced which should decide his doom. After all, should he really put this question, or not?

Never, from the time of his first introduction to Mrs. Patten, had a doubt on this subject entered Mr. Dalrymple's mind, until one day—the very day which he had fixed upon for the disclosure of his *passion*, when, dressed beyond his usual style, he was leaving his own house by the more private way of the garden, and drawing on with some difficulty a pair of new gloves, he paused for a moment at the gate of Mrs. Hepburn's piece of ground, and there was the childless mother herself, with her pale, placid face, and still sweet smile, just acknowledging his presence by a graceful bend of her head.

The thought which flashed across the mind of the engineer at that moment was strange and startling, from its being so entirely new to his experience; for it was no

other than a question asked of his own heart, whether in reality it would not be happier, and even more honourable, to ask this friendless creature to share the shelter of his home, than to seek for himself a splendid mockery of all which renders home attractive, and to lose for ever his own self respect?

"No doubt," said the engineer to himself, as he looked again over the garden railing, for the glove was obstinate and refused to be pulled on—"no doubt, the woman harbours resentment against me in her heart, and would enjoy the triumph of spurning me from her feet."

At that moment Mrs. Hepburn, who had immediately busied herself with her roses, after acknowledging the passing by of her neighbour, turned round, and seeing him still at her gate, ventured to address him in the same low tones which had touched his feelings a little more than was quite comfortable to him on the occasion of her application respecting her son.

"Sir," said she, "I have been wishing to offer you some of the plants out of my garden. It is, perhaps, rather late to remove them now, but I had no opportunity of mentioning the subject before; and after all, they are not worth much."

"Are you tired of them, then?" asked Mr. Dalrymple.

"Tired of them?" repeated Mrs. Hepburn. "Oh, no! I should never tire of them; but in all probability I shall not be here long."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Dalrymple. "I never heard that you were likely to remove. Perhaps you do not think the place agrees with you?"

The lady smiled; but it was a faint, sad smile, in its expression how much more melancholy than tears! "I like the place," said she, "but it is too expensive for me."

Mr. Dalrymple glanced at the rusty black of her old worn mourning, and he wondered at the moment how it was possible for one so dressed to look so unequivocally the gentlewoman all the while.

"Had you not better think again?" said he, "before taking so important a step. *I* don't find the place expensive."

"You?" said the lady, looking earnestly in his face, and slightly shaking her head, as if but too well aware of the difference between herself and him. She would have said more, but while again endeavouring to smile, her tears, which had been forcibly suppressed, obtained the mastery; and, averting her head, she wept at last without control.

"Good morning," said Mr. Dalrymple, and he walked away with rapid strides. Before he had gone far, however, another difficulty with the glove arrested his progress. This time he tore a finger off. It was of no use contending with it. He cast a backward look towards the range of houses amongst which his own was situated. That of the childless widow had now dwindled by the distance into a small strip of barely habitable space. No, no. After all that he had gone through, and laboured for, and with all that he now beheld dawning in the horizon before him, he was not the man to commit himself to a downward step. So the prosperous engineer went on, and bought himself another pair gloves, and this time he looked not backwards, nor to the right nor the left, but he went straight onward as he loved to go—whither?

CHAPTER XXVI.



WHILE the subject of his sister's *amiable* deceptions, Henry Egerton believed that in receiving Mrs. Lee beneath his roof, he was in reality discharging the debt of gratitude which he owed to her son, in the most agreeable manner to himself, and the most generous to her. Of course, the subject was not one to be openly discussed, and thus the pleasant feeling on his side remained for some time uninterrupted, nor was the lady herself at all conscious of the mistake. In short, the whole affair was arranged so entirely to Edith's satisfaction, that she could with difficulty restrain her exultation in the presence of Arnold, who not unfrequently looked in upon his mother in her new abode, and was delighted with the happy change effected in her circumstances.

"Your brother is better, I think," said Arnold one day to Miss Egerton, after sitting a few minutes with the poet alone in his library.

"He is happier," replied the sister, "and his health always revives with his spirits."

"I find him altogether changed," said Arnold,— "so frank, so communicative, so confiding."

“Ah!” said Miss Egerton, “he feels now that he is cherishing and caring for your mother, and thus rendering you the only return which it is possible for him to make for your care of his sister.”

Quick as lightning a suspicion flashed across the mind of Arnold, and he determined, if possible, to know the truth. It was contrary to his nature to adopt a circuitous mode of discovery, and he therefore plunged at once into the subject, by saying to Miss Egerton—“Does your brother know that my mother is living with you as a lodger?”

With all her ingenious inventions for conveying a false idea, it was curious that Miss Egerton retained a scrupulous—as she thought a *religious* horror of telling a direct verbal lie. Hitherto she had been remarkably successful in avoiding this expedient; but as all who *act* lies may be sure they will at one time or other be so pushed as to have to *speak* them too; so now her hour seemed come at last, and with a burning blush upon her face, she answered—“Of course, you know I could not tell him otherwise.”

“And you *have* told him, then,” said Arnold, “that my mother pays for living in your house?”

“I certainly shall tell him,” said Miss Egerton, “as soon as I find him in a state of mind to be talked with on business matters.”

“Miss Egerton,” said Arnold, fixing his clear eyes full upon her countenance, “whatever falsehood or deceit you choose to practice in your own affairs, I will suffer none in mine. I will tell your brother myself.”

Edith was petrified with horror, and stood speechless for a moment, but seeing Arnold actually turning away towards the library, she rushed after him, and seizing him

by the arm implored him to wait a moment and listen to her.

There was something in the earnest pleading voice of Edith as she said this, and in her meek and supplicating look and manner, which won a momentary pity for her agonised feelings; and Arnold went back with her into the sitting-room which she usually occupied. Here he sat down to listen, with a strong determination that nothing she might say should soften his purpose, or turn away his resolution from the act of duty which he beheld so clearly before him.

We have already said that Miss Egerton was beautiful, and in her emotion she was doubly so. Gentle, loving, and kind, she was the very woman to overcome the purpose of a compassionate man; for where command is weak, beauty has often proved too strong.

"Why," said Edith, applying a sweetly scented handkerchief to her eyes, "did you save me from the stormy waves, to consign me in this manner to worse than death? We were happy before you came amongst us. My brother and I were all the world to each other. If you take his affairs into your hands, you will kill him—indeed, you will. You do not, and you cannot, understand him."

"Miss Egerton," replied Arnold, "I desire not to meddle where my interference is not wished for. I appeal to your own conscience whether I have sought your confidence, or you mine? Even now I withdraw myself for ever, if you desire it."

"Oh! no, no, no," cried Edith. "You must not leave us now."

"I must either leave you," said Arnold, "or induce you to think and act differently."

"But you are so stern—so cruel," remonstrated Edith,

looking up with the most pleading expression. "Henry and I are not accustomed to a manner so harsh and forbidding as yours."

"The simple truth often sounds harsh," replied Arnold, "but it must be spoken, nevertheless."

"Not the whole truth," pleaded Miss Egerton again. "There are instances occurring every day, in which to speak the whole truth would be madness."

"Amongst near connections?" asked Arnold.

"Yes, I should think so," replied the lady.

"Miss Egerton," said he, "I have had my dreams like other men, and I have dreamed of a connection so close, so sacred, that the *whole truth* might be told without injury to its purity—its blessedness. It is not for me to dream of this connection now; but I am still of the opinion, that the nearer we approach in any of our relationships to that perfect trust, confidence, and integrity towards each other, the happier are the parties so connected, and the more honourable and lasting is the bond by which they are held together."

"But are there not morbid and sensitive minds, to whom the whole truth would be misery or death?"

"Yes, no doubt, if they have been pampered and fed on falsehoods."

"Put the case in a less repulsive form—say, if they have been blinded for their own good."

"Bind down their eyes, if you like, with a silken bandage, make the delusion as pleasant as you will, sometime or other the scales will fall, and—then——?"

"Ah! then, I grant you; but suppose this never happens to them until they die?"

"And suppose that you do keep them deceived until they die, and meeting them in eternity, the first look of a

father, a husband, or a brother convicts you of falsehood and deception? If it be terrible to be found out in this world, how much more terrible in the next! Besides which, do you believe it possible in any instance really to serve your fellow-creatures, while we are offending God?"

"But what can I do? If my course was to begin again, and if I had you to strengthen me in it, I believe I should act differently. I see nothing that I can do now with any hope of safety or success."

"And yet there is one thing that must be done."

"What is that?"

"You must tell your brother, or allow me to tell him, that he is not maintaining my mother at his own expense."

"Not now."

"Yes, now. The case is urgent. I will not endure this falsehood."

"Grant me but a week to think of it, and to form my plans."

"You have too many plans."

"And yet how well they have succeeded."

"Their success, in my opinion, has yet to be proved."

"They have made my brother happy."

"They may destroy him yet. The end has not come."

"To what end do you allude?"

"There *must* be an end of all falsehood. Either in this world or the next the truth *must* come to light. It is one of the most important characteristics of evil, and of falsehood more than any other kind of evil, that its tendency is to destroy itself—that it builds without foundation—and that consequently every added lie only renders

the edifice more certain to fall. On the other hand, it is one of the most important characteristics of truth as an element of moral being, that it must eventually triumph—must live for ever. Clothe it as you will, conceal, disguise, distort it as you may, the truth itself will rise supremely eminent above all human artifice, and will still exist, sublime in majesty, when you have perished from the earth. No matter then, indeed no matter now, under what amiable pretext you have violated the divine law—a law so pure and holy as to be regarded in the light of a principle of Deity itself—no matter, whether love and tenderness have nerved you for this misappropriation of ingenuity and effort, the broken law remains like the blackened ashes where the lightning stroke has passed. Is it amongst these hideous ruins that you will place yourself, a memorial of their perishable nature; or is it in an atmosphere of light, that you will seek and find your elements of existence—your everlasting home?"

"I have never thought on these subjects. They are too deep for me."

"Not at all. A child can understand the difference betwixt truth and falsehood."

"If I were a child again I might perhaps profit by your instruction and advice, but it is too late now."

"It is indeed too late to profit without pain. But since you deserve to suffer, a high sense of honour and of generosity would make you almost glory in that suffering that would rectify the errors of the past, and avert their fearful consequences even now."

"Yes, if my own suffering were all."

"You are thinking of the suffering of your brother?"

"Of course I am."

"Oh! treat him more worthily; make him more worthy

in himself. He is richly worth your utmost pains. If he were suffering from a frightful bodily disease, would you not inflict upon him a momentary pain, if that would cure him?"

"Most certainly I would."

"Yet what disease can be so horrible as that false estimate of himself, or rather of the world's opinion of himself, which you are cherishing—what more destructive than that passion which you have helped to nurture in his heart? Already you see it is eating away his life; undermining his happiness; and destroying all that is dignified and noble in his character. What littleness can be more contemptible than this hungering and thirsting after a momentary distinction; or what deception so false and cruel as that by which you are making him believe that he is distinguished, when he is not. Ah, Miss Egerton! if you admired your brother as I should like to be admired, if you loved him as I should like to be loved, you would cherish only that which is noble and truly estimable in his nature; and you would assist him to overcome, to subdue and to trample upon, all that is contemptible, injurious, and mean."

"You distress me as I never was distressed before. I said, that before you came we were happy, and now I feel as if I never should be happy again."

"You never could have been happy in the course you were pursuing."

"Yes, I was happy in a certain inferior way. But yet it satisfied *me*."

"And will it satisfy you now?"

"No, never more. You have poisoned what was pleasant to me, without giving me the power to find my pleasures elsewhere."

"I thought you believed yourself to be religious, Miss Egerton?"

"I hope I am."

"Did you ever kneel down and pray in this manner—
'God prosper me in the *lie* I am about to tell?'"

"Ah! do not speak so dreadfully. I never do tell lies. Indeed, I do assure you a lie, as you call it, is as dreadful to me as it can be to any one."

"Do you think then, that a lie is only something which blackens the lips over which it passes? I tell you, it blackens the soul from which it emanates, and curses the ear upon which it falls. Oh! if you did but know what it is to feel a holy love for any one—if you should ever live to know such love, how will you look back and hate yourself for that which you have felt, or fancied you felt, for your poor deluded brother!"

"But do you think there *is* such love on earth—a love that is perfectly sincere?"

"To be perfectly sincere must depend upon both parties, and seldom, I imagine, is such a degree of happiness permitted in this world. But the nearer our love approaches to this perfect sincerity, confidence, and trust, the less we shall have to regret or be ashamed of when we approach the confines of eternity."

"Ah! I shall never be like you! You are so strong—so stern—and I am unfortunately so weak. I have such a horror of giving pain."

"Allow me to explain the cause."

"I know the cause too well—my feelings are too sensitive—too acute. I have my brother's power of feeling, without his genius or his talent."

"Say rather, that you have your brother's vanity."

"Oh no, I do assure you, I have the meanest opinion

of myself—painfully mean. I never live through a single day without deploring my own faults and weaknesses—without even questioning whether I am a real Christian or not.”

“Let me recommend you to put away all doubts on this subject, and—”

“Ah! that is what my kindest and best friends tell me. I know the danger of these doubts.”

“I was going to say, and believe yourself shut out for ever, unless you can obtain forgiveness for the past, and strength for the future, to pursue a more upright and honourable course. Your friends are as culpable as yourself, if they encourage you to think it possible you can be a Christian on any other terms than these. You had better be a heathen at once, and you would really honour God more by throwing off the Christian name altogether, than by making a profession of religion while deliberately and systematically violating his holy law of truth. Believe me, there is no calamity so destructive to the well-being of society, as it now exists, as this laxity of morals on the part of those who call themselves the followers of Christ.”

“But to return to your former statement, that you cannot bear to give pain. I was going to explain this to you, if you will give me leave.”

“Go on. You cannot make me more unhappy than I am.”

“Well then, the real state of the case is this,—and you are by no means singular in your mistake. You think it is the dread of giving pain which deters you, and no doubt this has some weight with a disposition kind as yours; but in the secret of your heart, you have a far greater dread of being looked upon as the instrument of that pain

yourself—of being less beloved, and less confided in, than you have been; and then regarded less as the ministering angel to your brother's happiness. Look back for a moment, and tell me, or rather tell your own heart, whether it is not so."

"Perhaps it is. But you confuse my understanding, as much as you disturb my peace."

"I know I have talked to you too long, perhaps too severely. I had no right to inflict upon you a moment's pain, nor should have presumed so far, but for my own interests, as well as my own integrity, being just now in some measure involved with yours. If you are hurt by my plainness, as I fear you must be, I entreat you not to be offended."

Edith held out her hand; and as she looked appealingly to Arnold with tears in her eyes, and with quivering lips that refused the utterance of what she was about to say, he could not help thinking how dangerous was the influence of beauty, love, and tenderness combined, when thrown into the opposite scale with principle!—how much more dangerous when a false morality is added, and all are made to wear the semblance of a self-denying religion.

"I will not urge you further to-day," said Arnold to the weeping beauty before him. He was at once affected by the distress which he had occasioned, and perhaps himself a little touched by the same weakness which he had just been condemning. Struck also with a sense of his own harshness towards one who must have been neglected or misled in early youth, and altogether very differently circumstanced from himself, he held the gentle hand which had been placed in his, and with a voice whose softened tones betrayed his own emotion, he said everything that was friendly, soothing, and respectful; and thus at

once implying a consciousness of his own severity as a judge, and his own presumption as a friend, he took his leave, without so much as extorting a promise from the lady, that at any given time she would either make the necessary disclosure herself, or suffer him to make it.

Had the disposition of Miss Egerton been like that of a former friend of Arnold's, she would have regarded the conclusion of this interview as a triumph obtained by her own personal charms. But very different was the state of feeling which he left behind him in the present instance; so different, that Edith no sooner found herself alone, than she sank into a chair, and covering her face with both her hands, wept long and bitterly. The cause of these tears, perhaps the most painful she had ever shed, was a secret sense of something like being shut out from the companionship of the noble and the good. Ah! had the blow struck yet more deeply, it might have awakened a more acute, but yet more salutary pain, arising out of the sense of being shut out from the fold of Christ, and from the fellowship of those whose highest aim is to walk irreproachably with God.

Long, long was the reverie which followed this strange interview. It was interrupted at last by the entrance of a servant, bringing a message from the brother, which recalled his sister to a sense of present duty. She had promised him that early on that morning she would visit a public library, where the latest periodicals were to be seen, and from whence they could be taken away for a few hours' reading by the first applicants. A considerable portion of the day had now been lost, and the poet had naturally become impatient to learn what pleasant tidings the opening month had to reveal.

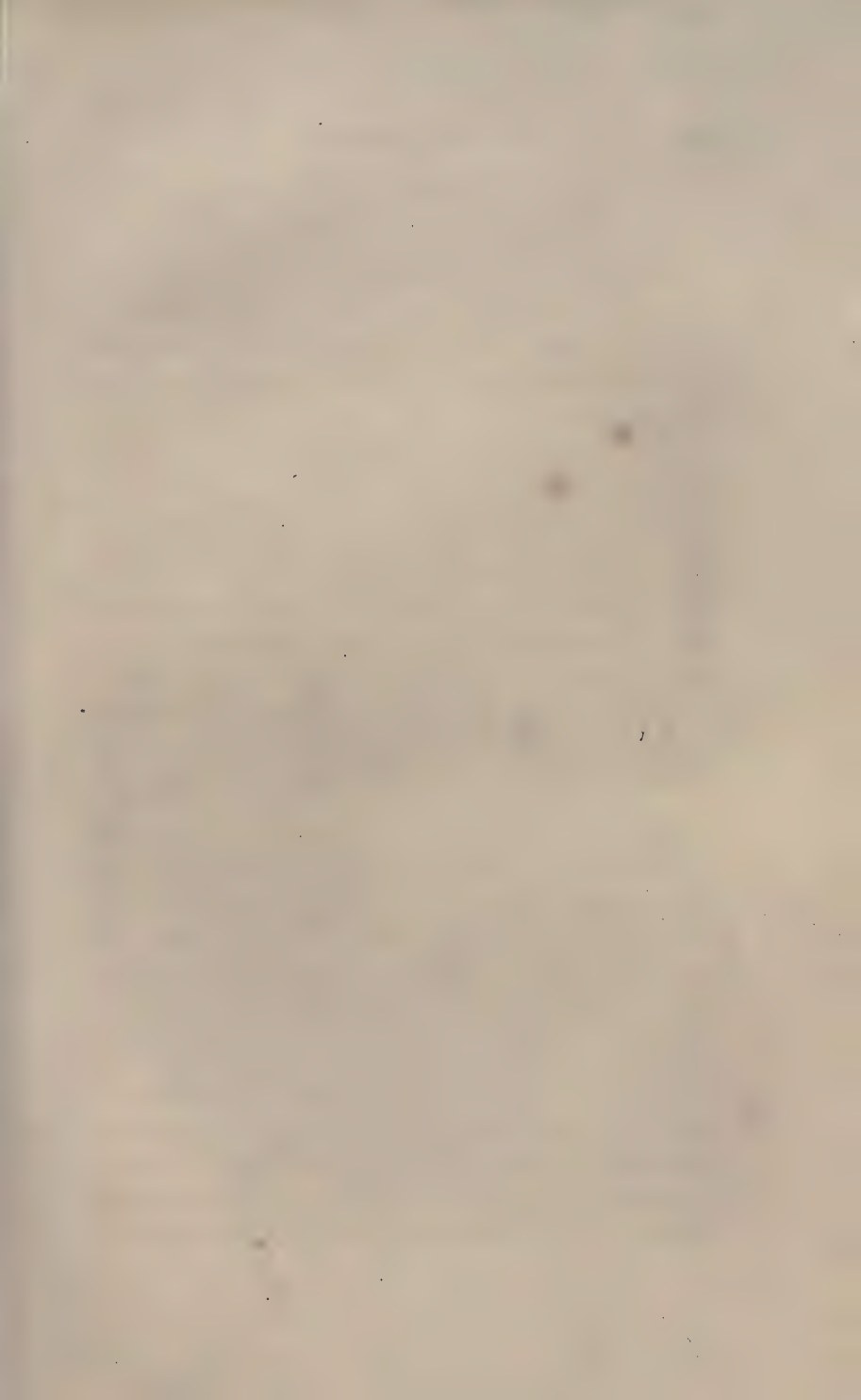
With less alacrity than usual, Edith prepared for the

performance of this familiar task. There was a sickness at her heart as she called to mind the various expedients to which she had so often resorted, with at best but faint success; and she now reflected, as she had never done before, how immeasurably inferior was any result of such a nature to the anxiety, solicitude, and actual pain incurred in the purchase of a reward so poor and unsatisfying.

With a listless kind of languor very different from the eagerness which on former occasions her manner had displayed, Edith first turned over the reviews from which she derived the greatest amount of hope. They were all blank—dumb—dead—alike to her despondency and to her wish. Some eyes as earnest as her own were present, peering over those pages which sometimes seem to bear the message of its final doom to youthful and aspiring genius; and some were there who looked for nothing but a momentary amusement ever deriving its chief recommendation from the fact of being early found, and first enjoyed.

Amongst the latter class of loiterers there was one not altogether strange to the reader, although his introduction hitherto has been far from one of a literary nature; and even now, it was evident that his object was less to read, than to look over new engravings, and in fact to see what was going on in any department, either amongst the books or the visitors who lingered around the table, and turned over their leaves.

While engaged in this vague pursuit, the ear of Arthur Hamilton, for he it was who thus amused himself, was as quick as his eye, to catch any passing intelligence or amusement for the moment; and at the same time that he observed the lovely figure of Edith when she entered the





library, he overheard the whispered observations of a group beside him, who spoke of her to each other as the lady who had been rescued from the waves, and restored to life in a manner always described as miraculous.

As the expressions "lovely" and "splendid creature" passed from one to another, Arthur thought he had seldom seen any human being so attractive; and while contemplating her earnest yet graceful manner, he mentally associated her personal charms with much that he had heard of her devotion to her brother, and of other excellencies of heart and character, all greatly enhanced in public esteem both by her beauty, and by the celebrity of that event which had marked her out as an object of distinction amongst the society of M——.

As Arthur watched the movements of Miss Egerton with mingled feelings of interest and admiration, and with an eager desire to place in her hand the object of her search, whatever it might be, a gentleman with whom he was slightly acquainted stepped up to him, and holding in his hand an open review, asked him if he had seen that; at the same time indicating by the direction of his eyes that it had some reference to Edith.

Taking the volume from his friend, Arthur Hamilton was delighted to find that it contained a very flattering notice of the last volume of poems by Edith's brother.

"This is capital!" said Arthur, glancing down the pages. "This is exactly what I wanted."

It was exactly what Edith wanted too; and when Arthur, bowing and presenting to her the open book, respectfully directed her attention to the article, he saw at once that no preconcerted plan, however ingenious, could have brought about a more favourable introduction of himself to the lady's notice.

If Edith had appeared beautiful before her eager eye glanced over this flattering page, a more trivial observer than Arthur might have been forgiven for pausing to gaze upon her animated face as she read, with heightened colour, what her pride in her brother, and her interest in his gratification, had so long taught her to look upon as the highest enjoyment which life had to offer either to her or to him. Nor was the expression of gratitude and delight with which she thanked the giver of this newly found treasure, less lovely than her downward look as she read the page with parted lips, as if she must actually read aloud, and make the world hear how her brother was commended and admired.

"I must hasten home with this," said Edith. "You have made me rich, indeed; and I thank you from my heart."

So saying the lady gracefully withdrew, quite unembarrassed by the gaze of those who watched her movements; for her thoughts and feelings were so absorbed in the one theme of overpowering interest, that she failed to observe the impression made by her own glowing cheeks and animated manner.

Amongst the gentlemen who remained behind, there was but one who ventured to throw a slight mixture of condemnation into the flattering comments pronounced upon the lovely vision just departing from their view, and he was borne down by such a weight of scorn and anger, vented in no measured terms upon his want of taste and feeling, that his ill-judged impertinence was quickly stopped in the utterance; whatever might remain to be the feelings of the speaker.

"For my part," said Arthur Hamiltor, and he spoke with as much vehemence as if he had pledged himself to

do battle for female excellence, wherever it might be found, "I admire not the cold calculations of that woman who will weigh out and reckon up the exact amount of truth contained in her words, when she has the happiness of the man she loves in her keeping. Commend me to a sister, and still more to a wife, who will put me on good terms with myself, and will keep me in that pleasant situation, whatever it may cost her to do so. If I am fool enough to believe everything she tells me, that is a different affair altogether—that is *my* look out, not *hers*. I like the spirit of that beautiful creature, even more than I like her face; and I only wish the world was more rich in women resembling her in both."

As Arthur Hamilton said this, a sudden expression of fretfulness and dissatisfaction passed over his face; and tossing away to another part of the table the books which he had collected together, he rose to leave the room. Alas! for poor Kate: the star of her influence was very low in his horizon just at that moment. No doubt, in the secret of his heart, he was wishing, and wishing intensely, that she was more beautiful herself, and not half so strict and so decided in her ideas of right and wrong.

With rapid steps Edith Egerton had retraced the way back to her brother's residence where the time of her absence had appeared so long, that Mrs. Lee, as her custom sometimes was, had taken her work to sit in the library with the invalid, and to assist in beguiling his mind under the impatience and irritation, to which on all similar occasions he was subject. Failing in her kind endeavours to engage his attention by any attempts at conversation, she was glad to consult his wishes in any way that might amuse or oblige, and readily consented to seek out for him a set of papers and periodicals which she

knew that Miss Egerton was in the habit of keeping under her own care.

Delighted with her success, Mrs. Lee hastened back with a whole armful of these; and the eager eye of the poet soon glanced from one to another, discovering as if by a kind of intuition the exact spot in which he expected his own praises would be.

Mrs. Lee, however, soon discovered that a kind of mystery attended this examination—that the papers failed to satisfy; and, in short, that the object so eagerly looked for, was not so easily found.

“How is this?” said he at last, as his brow darkened and contracted. “I wrote down all the passages at the time that Edith read them, with the date and the name of the papers, and now I find nothing like what she read. How is this, Mrs. Lee? Am I dreaming, or am I dead? for my very senses seem to be playing me false.”

Mrs. Lee would gladly have evaded the question, for she thought it was no business of hers; but the look and manner of her companion became every moment more agitated, and his words more vehement; until at last she answered, “I believe your sister can explain all. I am sure she has none but the kindest and best intentions—but——”

“Kindest!” vociferated the brother. “You don’t mean to say that Edith has been playing me false?”

“She is here to speak for herself,” said Mrs. Lee, retreating to a distant part of the room; and at that moment Edith entered with the open volume in her hand, with the rosy blush of health and exercise upon her cheek, and with every demonstration of the most intense happiness in her whole look and manner. There was, in fact, something so perfectly overwhelming in the bounding joy

with which she rushed into the room, and throwing off her bonnet, began immediately to read, that the bewildered attention of her brother was caught by the flattering words, and for one bright moment he lived again.

Amidst the confusion of ideas occasioned by the half-discovery of his sister's deceptions, the vague suspicion that his credulity had been tampered with, and his vanity gratified at the expense of honour and of truth, it was a luxury of tenfold value to drink in the honied words which he now not only heard, but saw; for he had insisted upon glancing over the page from which his sister was reading, and there lay the precious truths like sparkling gems before his eyes. There was no deception now. He was at last beginning to be understood and appreciated; and, after all, that is the true reward which genius longs and pines for.

Happy then, and brilliant, and exalting, was that golden moment. Alas! that there should come a cloud over the bright horizon. Yet so it was; and a corresponding cloud fell over the illuminated countenance of the young man, as he turned and looked intently at his sister, saying at the same time, "And Floresca? Do you think Floresca will see that passage?"

"No doubt she will," responded Edith.

But an expression of pain agitated the countenance of the young poet, as if a spasm had that moment affected his heart. His eyes flashed fire, and his teeth clenched tightly, might be seen between the thin lips, compressed and drawn aside, as if with the difficulty of taking breath. With the letting in of that horrible suspicion, which now agonised his soul, it seemed as if the great deluge were come again—as if the floods were overwhelming him, and the very foundations of his life were giving way; for if

that green island in the desert of his existence were not real, what was there left for him to trust to or repose in? It was terrible to doubt, but might not the certainty be still more terrible?

"Edith," said he at last, "is there *really* such a being as Floresca, or have you deceived me in this?"

Miss Egerton, entirely thrown off her guard by the sudden and decisive nature of this appeal, was unable to answer at first. Moreover, she was unable to utter either yes or no; and nothing else would satisfy the enquirer. In fact, he *would* not accept any other answer; and while her cheeks were hot and crimson, and her eyes felt as if filled with flashes of red fire, the bright and searching glance of her brother was still fixed upon her face, and his voice—growing every moment more earnest and imperious—kept rapidly repeating in deep, low, and unnatural tones, the same enquiry, "Edith, is there really such a being as Floresca?"

"No," was the guilty answer; and it found its fitting echo in a scream so loud and terrible, as scarcely to be human.

Edith Egerton, until her dying day, never forgot that scream. As time swept on it grew upon her ear. At the moment of its utterance, though seeming to those who heard it to fill all space, it was less regarded than afterwards; for the next instant Edith saw that her brother had fallen back upon the couch; and then there were low choaking sounds, and the wild struggle of weak, distorted limbs; and then a call for help, and rushing feet, and words spoken in sharp whispers—few and seldom—and then there was the bearing of a senseless burden up to a higher chamber; and then a gleam of hope, and then returning life; but how, and in what form or measure, no

one knew but Arnold's mother, who now at last had found her post of usefulness and place of value.

Mrs. Lee, on first discovering the real situation of the brother, had insisted upon the withdrawal of Edith from his presence, for her terror, added to her violent grief, which could not be assuaged, made her altogether incapable of rendering the least assistance, and even stood in the way of the kind offices of those who were more efficient than herself. At last she was forcibly borne away to her own room, where her emotions became so violent, as to threaten her life. As is frequently the case, however, with sorrow wholly unrestrained, its very violence exhausted its power; and thus, when Mrs. Lee communicated the agreeable intelligence that her brother had revived, and was really better, Edith was without much difficulty persuaded to seek that repose she so much needed; more especially as the orders of the medical attendant were strict and imperative, that no individual should be allowed to enter the patient's room except Mrs. Lee, and any other nurse whose experienced aid might be necessary. Edith, above all others, was to be kept away, because everything calculated to agitate or excite might yet prove highly injurious.

Under these restrictions, Edith spent the night, though kindly visited at times by Mrs. Lee, and cheered each time with the pleasant tidings that her brother was better—*always better*—farther particulars she was unable to elicit, and the well-disciplined countenance of Mrs. Lee, betrayed nothing more.

It indicated no want of sisterly affection, that towards morning Edith slept. Excessive weeping produces a strong tendency to sleep in many constitutions, where there is no deficiency of feeling; and thus it was that Edith forgot her sorrows and anxieties for a few short hours.

After such sleep there is always a distressing kind of awaking, as if surrounded by innumerable dangers and distresses, all greatly enhanced by the fact of our having slept, and thus let the time unconsciously glide on. Edith started up with those vague apprehensions, and could not for some time recall their real cause. A letter lay upon her table, placed there by some messenger who had thought it a pity to disturb her slumbers. Edith snatched it eagerly. It was written in a strange hand to her—a stiff and crabbed hand, extremely uninviting. She opened it hurriedly, and glanced hastily at the signature. The name was one she had been familiar with in childhood, but so long ago, that it scarcely called up a single association, and certainly not any of the most pleasing description. It was her mother's maiden name of Johnstone, and belonged to an uncle who had left his native country in early life, and had seldom been heard of by his family or friends since that time. Rumours, it is true, had occasionally reached them of his successful career in one of the British colonies; but altogether the interest which these rumours once excited had died away, and the now rising generation in all probability thought no more of Alexander Johnstone than if such a man had never existed.

No sooner, however, had the curious eye of Edith glanced a little over the pages of the letter, than she became profoundly interested in its contents. And well she might; for it conveyed the important intelligence to Edith and her brother, as his sole remaining relatives, that it was the intention of this now wealthy gentleman to return and settle in England; and if such arrangements could be made agreeable to all parties, to settle so near to them as to be within reach of their attentions and services,

now urgently required by his declining years, and many infirmities contracted in an unhealthy climate.

Lest there should be any apprehension, however, of trouble unrepaid, a very satisfactory hint was dropped in the concluding paragraph, that in the selection of a residence, money would be of no object, as nothing but the securing of an ample independence would have induced the writer to subject himself for so long time to the various injuries which his constitution had sustained. Nor was the letter closed without another, and to some persons a yet more encouraging hint, that having no nearer connections living, whatever services were required would meet with their ultimate and abundant reward.

So far the letter was intelligible enough; and this was sufficient to open out to Edith a dawning of prosperity, so far beyond her utmost hopes, that for a moment longer she forgot the events of the past evening, in the joyful anticipation of this golden morrow, which appeared to be awaiting her and her brother. But just as the gush of delight made her drop the letter, and look upward with clasped hands, the sad conviction came again; and a thrill of horror crossed her mind, that possibly that brother so beloved might not live till the period of his uncle's return.

"I will tell him the glad tidings," she exclaimed, "and if anything can restore him, I know *that* will. They say I must not see nor speak to him, but they none of them understand Henry so well as I do. It is I alone who know what he suffers from degrading thoughts—from depression and despondency; and it must rest with me alone to call him back to life and to happiness. Poor Henry! but *poor* no longer now. Ah! you little know what is in store for you—an honoured name—a golden passport to society——!"

And thus she rambled on in thought, even after her lips had ceased to utter any sounds; for she was stealing on tiptoe to her brother's chamber, determined if possible to obtain access to his ear, in spite of all restrictions.

It happened that Mrs. Lee had just at that time left the room, and the patient being more composed and quiet, a dozing nurse was seated by the bed, the room being still as death.

Silently then did Edith glide along, entering the shrouded chamber without disturbing either nurse or patient. She thought her brother slept, and planned how she could wake him with a soft whisper close beside his ear. Opening the curtains of the bed, a dim light from a night-lamp fell upon his face; and, stooping down, she had begun to speak in low and soothing tones, when——was that her brother?—paralyzed—distorted—frightful to behold!—was that her brother, once so beautiful?

It was. The mingled emotions of one convulsive moment had been too much for his enfeebled frame, and that fearful stroke had left him for the present a hideous spectacle, but happily unconscious of his actual state.

CHAPTER XXVII.



UNCONSCIOUS of the use which had already been made of his own idea, Arnold Lee went steadily on, pursuing the same course of practical utility, until what he esteemed the fitting time at last arrived, for the explanation of his views to those who were to profit by their execution.

This occurred on the occasion of his being sent for one day to hold a consultation with his master, and Sir James Crawford at Waverton; when, seeing the plans of the embankment upon the table, he begged of the two gentlemen, if they considered themselves sufficiently at liberty, to allow him to engage their attention for a short time with a project of his own, by which he believed the great object so long contemplated might be effectually accomplished.

The baronet shook his head, and looked knowingly, as if to indicate that he was already in possession of the golden secret; while Mr. Dalrymple most unequivocally expressed his disinclination to be detained in a manner so unnecessary and unlooked for. Aware, however, that he had to speak on a subject of which one of the party at least could never tire, and still more encouraged by a consciousness of having something to say well worth their listening to, Arnold, nothing daunted, began his explana-

tion, which he pursued with method and clearness, now and then casting a triumphant glance at Mr. Dalrymple, which seemed to say, "What do you think of that?" or "Dare you now say that my plans are not worth listening to?"

The countenance of the engineer was, however, less affected by these statements than might have been expected. In fact he made no scruple to take up a book and begin to read, while the baronet himself showed symptoms of impatience, and at last succeeded in stopping the tide of Arnold's eloquence, by waving his hand, frowning, and indicating by other methods that he wanted to be heard himself.

Arnold was of course compelled to pause, and Sir James then said to him, "And do you really speak of this as your own idea?"

"Of course I do," replied Arnold, promptly. "If it had been another man's, I should have told you so."

The two gentlemen exchanged looks and nods.

"My dear sir," began Sir James, with a look and tone of voice which implied that the person addressed was anything but *dear*, "I am very sorry you should have given yourself all this trouble, as we have already been put in possession of the same idea."

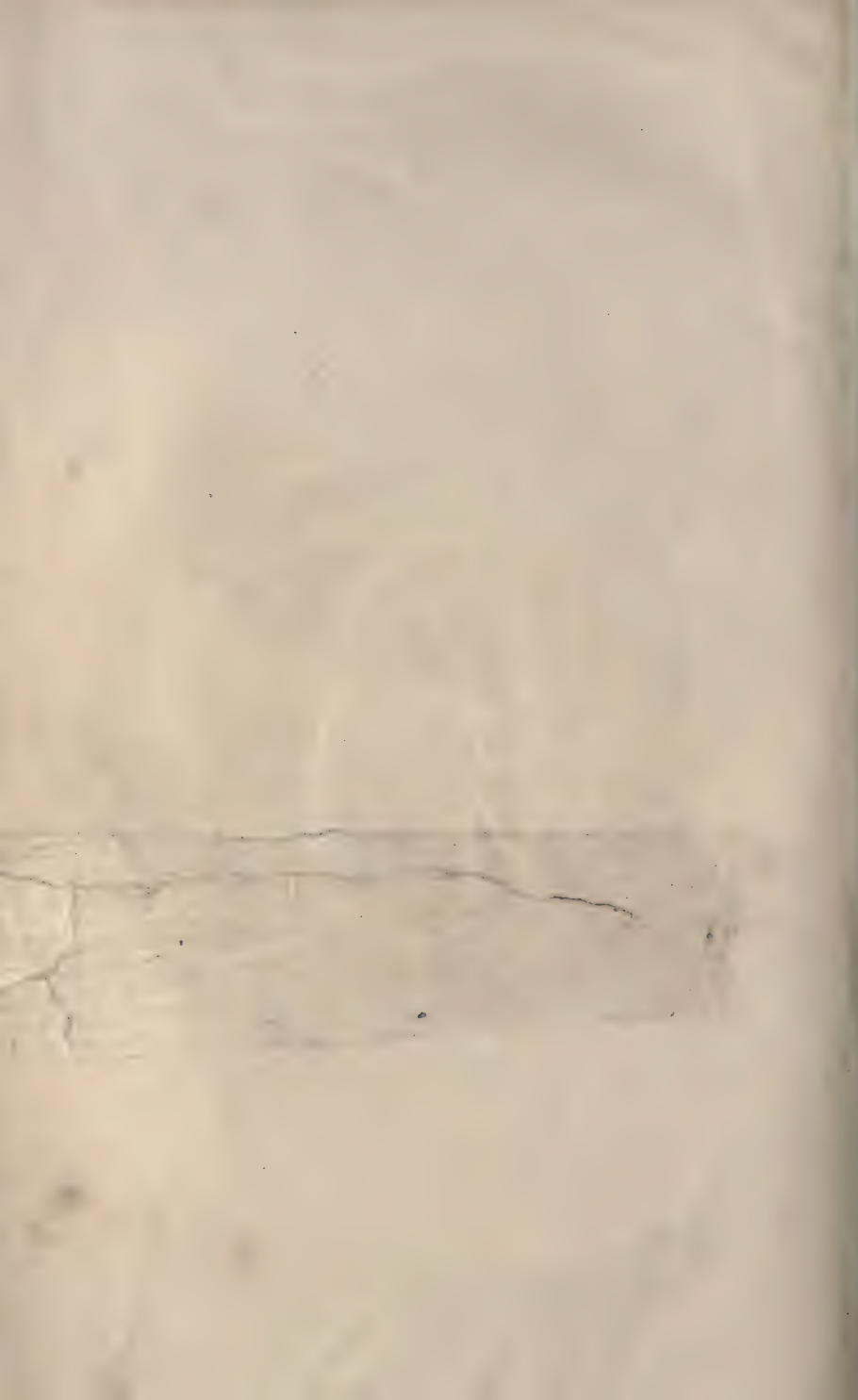
"Impossible," said Arnold, starting, and then looking earnestly at both gentlemen.

"And I am still more sorry," Sir James went on to say, "that you should have attempted to lay to your own credit what belongs by right to another."

"You astonish me," said Arnold. "I have not the slightest conception of your meaning."

"Perhaps not," said the baronet, and he turned towards Mr. Dalrymple with that peculiar kind of laugh which





implies a world of insult and provocation, and which is infinitely more difficult to endure with equanimity of temper, than the most direct and bitter abuse.

Arnold was not naturally of a cool temperament, but he determined so far to command himself as to dive to the root of this mystery, and if necessary to insist upon having it explained. With this view he spoke out boldly, and assured the gentlemen, he had never mentioned the subject to any human being, except one day to his friend Arthur Hamilton.

Again they exchanged looks, and the truth at that moment flashed across the mind of Arnold—a truth so repugnant to all his feelings of honour and of friendship, as to cause the warm blood to rush to his very temples, suffusing his whole face with a glow which was instantly mistaken for the blush of meanness and shame.

Again the knowing gentlemen looked at each other, and now their suspicions were confirmed.

“It is impossible,” said Arnold, “that Arthur Hamilton should have spoken of this plan as originating with himself. I am sure he is too honourable for that.”

“He is your friend, I *think*,” said Mr. Dalrymple, peering sharply from under his eyebrows, and with his teeth slightly shown between his contracted lips.

“He *was* my friend,” exclaimed Arnold, “but I will own no man for a friend who can rob me even of an idea.”

The two gentlemen laughed out aloud. “This is really too rich,” said the baronet. “But we want time to enjoy it. You and your *friend*, Mr. Lee, must settle the business between you; and as I am a magistrate, I warn you against all fighting. Before proceeding to extremities, however, let me convince you that we are possessed of

sufficient evidence to quiet any one attempting to impose upon our credulity as you have done.

With this the baronet placed before Arnold certain papers, some containing notes made immediately after the conversation held with Arthur Hamilton, on the day of his dining at Waverton, and others covered with plans, or rather sketches of plans, made by his own hand, and all illustrating, in different forms, the one hopeful theory which Arnold had communicated to his friend.

After the first ebullition of indignation had passed over, Arnold could not help feeling sensibly the odious position in which he must unavoidably be standing with those who misunderstood him so grossly, while insisting upon the appropriation of a mere idea, and an idea believed by them to be another person's all the while. With anger boiling in his veins, he therefore compelled himself to assume an outward calmness, which belied his inward feelings; and, asking if the gentlemen had any further business with him that morning, he rose from his seat, took up his hat, and prepared to depart."

"Of course," said Mr. Dalrymple, "we require your agency in carrying out these plans. We expect you to superintend the works, and you must first understand them."

"I should have thought Arthur Hamilton a fitter person to be appointed to that office," said Arnold.

"Young man," said Sir James, "I do not like this spirit of yours—this envy of one whom you call your friend. If it were not altogether too childish an affair to notice seriously, I should be inclined to have you thrown out of my employment altogether."

"As you please, Sir James," replied Arnold, "I shall offer no objection to that."

"Let me tell you," said the baronet, becoming now really angry, "this independence becomes you very badly. I know who you are, and how you are circumstanced; and I can assure you it is not every engineer who would like to take *you* into his service."

"I think, Sir James," said Arnold, "you told me just now you were a magistrate. If that be your office, its duties compel you to give every man his due. Insult is not my due, for I have done nothing to deserve it. I know that I am poor, and that my family is degraded—no one can know that so well as myself; but I know also that I have served Mr. Dalrymple well and faithfully, and that he cannot be so well served by any other person for so little pay. This is the secret of my connection with him. I know of no other."

"Come, come," said the baronet, cooling down a little. "We have no time to waste in foolery of this kind. It strikes me you are a very impertinent young man, but you may go away for the present. We don't want your assistance at any rate to-day."

Arnold walked out of the room without another word. As the door closed after him, Sir James observed, "It runs in the blood, I think. Who could have believed he would have dared to come before us with a sly trick like that."

"I don't like the fellow," responded Mr. Dalrymple. "He *is always poor*."

By this expression the contempt and the hatred of the engineer were alike implied. To be poor, was with him the unpardonable sin. He had scarcely even forgiven himself, and had certainly never been on good terms with himself, during the time when he was poor. His estimate on this important point had greatly changed of late, and

was changing every day, as the public became more sensible of his claims to popular regard. These claims were developing themselves rapidly. First it was rumoured in the town of M—— that he had been selected before a hundred others, all well tried and well established men, as the sole conductor of some public works of immense responsibility; then that the emoluments were prodigious; then that he had purchased a neighbouring estate; then that he was sending out ships to foreign parts; then that he was a successful speculator in various mercantile transactions—all profitable; and the long catalogue of merits, each undeniable in its claims to popular applause, was swelled by the still loftier merit of being the accepted suitor of a wealthy widow, under whose approving smiles he was about to become the master of one of the most envied establishments in the town of M——.

No wonder Mr. Dalrymple began to be on the best possible terms with himself, when everybody else was seeking to be on good terms with him—when the poor crouched low as he passed; and the rich smiled sweetly down upon his head; and the half-way class perpetually dogged his steps in the pleasing hope that they themselves, or their fathers, sons, or brothers, might obtain promotion at his hands; for no man ever lifts himself up in the world, without inspiring a strong confidence in his being able to lift up others; and thus it was that the successful engineer became one of the most popular of all the inhabitants of M——.

It is true, that the great theatre of this success lay chiefly at a distance from his present residence; but this fact, with the consequences it entailed of frequent absence from his home, tended rather to enhance the value of his personal merits, in the opinion of his now numerous friends;

for it is quite possible that a more intimate acquaintance, and a closer inspection of his personal character, would have tended a little in the opposite direction. This, however, would have been only while he occupied his present residence, gave no dinners, mixed in no parties, nor associated with other gentlemen of influence and high standing in the place. Some of which impediments to his distinction still operated in all their force, and therefore it was that an advantageous alliance became absolutely necessary for the furtherance of his wishes, hitherto only half fulfilled.

It may easily be supposed that when Arnold Lee made his exit from the presence of his employers on the occasion just described, he left them not in the best possible humour; and it was rather unfortunate for a request about to be made to him by Arthur Hamilton, that the two young gentlemen met, unexpectedly to Arnold, before he reached his humble lodging at the village inn.

With a countenance more than usually smiling, Arthur advanced towards his friend, and while he complained of having been laboriously occupied at an early hour of the day, it was evident that his exertions had not been very painfully protracted, if, indeed, he had actually been doing anything to deserve the name of exertion. Whether he had or not, he now flourished a riding whip in his hand, and appeared to be only awaiting the arrival of Arnold, before mounting his horse to ride back to the town.

A few commonplace observations were all that passed between the two friends until they approached the village, when Arthur said in a careless tone, as if just recollecting a trifle which had previously escaped his memory, "By the way, Arnold, can you lend me a sovereign or two?"

"I don't think I can," replied Arnold, very shortly.

"Then you can let it alone," said Arthur, laughing. "You are remarkably civil this morning. What in the world has happened to you?"

Arnold was silent for some moments; at last he stopped and looked full into the face of his friend, saying at the same time in his most direct and earnest manner—"Did you repeat what I told you, about keeping the water out from yon hollows, to Sir James and Mr. Dalrymple?"

"Of course I did, and very proud I was to be able to speak sense on the subject, for once in my life."

"Did you repeat it as if it had been told you, or as if it was your own idea?"

"Why, to tell the truth, when I first began I had no intention beyond throwing a little light upon their wise cogitations; but they took to the idea so kindly, and they made so much of me as a clever fellow, that for my life I could not help carrying on the joke. In fact, it tickled my fancy to such a degree, that I laughed all the way home, and would have told you the fun, only that you were so intolerably sulky that night, and would not hear anything I had to say. Upon my word, it was the best farce I ever witnessed, and I know you would have enjoyed it as much as myself."

"And do you know what your fun has done for me?"

"No, certainly. How should I?"

"Then I'll tell you. It has subjected me to the grossest insult I ever endured in my life; and that from two men whom I was endeavouring to serve."

"How in the world should my nonsense do that?"

"Simply because it was unprincipled nonsense. Arthur, I like fun as well as any one, but I hate dishonourable fun."

"Dishonourable; my good fellow, you are turning a comedy into a tragedy. I do assure you, I had no idea at the moment beyond amusing myself with a harmless jest. How can you be so absurd as to look at it in this serious light?"

"Because it *was* serious to me, and is serious yet; and will be serious, until you do me ample justice. But, no, that can never be. You can never recall those bitter taunting words about my family——."

"What! did they dare to speak to you in that way?"

"In every way that was galling and contemptuous. They actually suspected my truth, and do so yet; and they added to that, the suspicion that I was mean enough to want to appropriate your discovery as my own."

Arthur Hamilton laughed outright, for the absurdity of the misapprehension altogether struck him more forcibly, than the injury and injustice done to his friend.

"Is it possible," he exclaimed, "that those two old wiseacres could have made such fools of themselves?"

"Of course you will undeceive them," said Arnold.

"O! of course," replied Arthur, "the first opportunity."

"To-morrow?" asked Arnold.

"Why, to-day, if I could," replied his friend, "and I'll see what can be done; for to-morrow, as I was going to tell you, I am going out with a party pic-nicing to that old Abbey."

"Whose fancy is that?" said Arnold.

"Whose fancy?" repeated Arthur. "Don't you guess?"

"Not at all," said Arnold. "You have so many friends, and are so popular with all the party-giving

ladies, that it would be impossible for me to surmise who was to be the patroness of to-morrow's fete."

"It is the gay bride herself," said Arthur, "no other than your old friend Dorothy."

Arthur shaded his eyes from the sun with his open hand, and turned his face towards the embankment.

"What are those stupid fellows doing?" said he; and when he had succeeded in making his friend look away in the same direction, he found time to recover his self-possession, and thus to speak, even on this subject, with his wonted composure. "They are returned, then," said he, with a tone of indifference.

"Oh! yes," said Arthur. "They are returned with a witness, and Dorothy is setting the whole town on fire with envy and excitement. The Norris party are all distanced—sunk below the horizon, and only sending up their spite in clouds and smoke. I wish you were amongst us, Arnold. It's glorious fun."

"But you see," said Arnold, "I am buried in mud. *That* is my element."

"To recur again," said Arthur, "to our first subject. I'm not very flush of money just now, Arnold, and these pic-nics are sometimes rather expensive, with horses, and carriages, and footmen, and nobody knows what. Can you accommodate me with five pounds? My own money will be due in a week, and, little as it is, it will enable me to repay you, at any rate."

"I think, Arthur, if I were you," said his friend, "I would not go with such a party at all, under present circumstances. It is miserable to be short of money amongst people of that description."

"Ah! you old croaker!" said Arthur. "You and Kate Staunton are the exact counterparts of one another, for

ever preaching up economy, without making one in love with the practice of it. I should like to know what good economy does to either of you?"

"You should first consider," said Arnold, "what we should be without it."

"Why, look at me, now!" said Arthur, and he held himself up as no mean specimen of what the opposite system could do towards making a fine gentleman—"only look at me," he continued, "I take myself to be a rising man, and that you know means a rich one, while you are grovelling for ever amongst your economicals, and no one dreams of giving you a lift."

"Is any one about to confer that favour upon you?" asked Arnold.

"I don't know exactly," replied his friend, "but I have shrewd suspicions of something in the wind."

"Well, don't forget," said Arnold, "that you have an act of justice to perform towards a less fortunate friend." And with that he would have walked away, but Arthur detained him by saying—"And don't you forget that you have to lend me five pounds."

"Come in with me, then," said Arnold; "but mind you, it is only on one condition that I can possibly let you have this money. It must be returned to me in ten days from this time." Arthur promised that it should; and Arnold, after going up to his little chamber at the inn, returned with the money in his hand, and placing it in that of his friend, the latter was soon mounted, and riding rapidly back to the town.

It was indeed true, as Arthur Hamilton had suggested, that there were favourable signs in the times as regarded himself. He did not throw away his money, and dress, and visit, and ride, for nothing. He did not assume the

air and manners of a gentleman in easy circumstances for nothing, either; nor did he follow the hounds, and resort to billiard-rooms, and make speeches at public dinners, for nothing. All these were telling facts as they affected the society of M——, so much so, that few persons in that locality would have dreamed of placing Arthur Hamilton in the same rank of life with Arnold Lee. The reason was a sufficient and conclusive one—the annual tailor's bill of one of these young gentlemen, was ten times the amount of what was spent in the same way by the other.

Had Mr. Dalrymple been less occupied away from his home, he must have discovered some distinctive difference between the two friends, less favourable to Arthur Hamilton in a business point of view, than his present opinion would warrant. Such, however, were the methodical habits of Arnold in the office, and such his influence there, even when not present in person, that whenever the engineer did return, he found all things in order, and even work progressing in a wonderful manner. He found Arthur there too, sometimes; and from the fact of such discovery not unfrequently repeated, he argued that it was *his* influence entirely, which had given a tone of order, regularity, and application, to whatever was transacted there. He asked no questions. It was not his habit to do so, but he looked complacently upon the young man, and still contemplated, sometime or other, admitting him to a closer connection with himself, in a position at once dignified and confidential.

Perhaps it may be thought scarcely in keeping with the stern character and strict business habits of the engineer, that he should be one of the foremost in attributing peculiar merit to Arthur Hamilton, because

of his gentlemanly habits and associations; yet such is not unfrequently the case with a class of persons particularly deficient themselves in popular accomplishments, and at the same time emulous of the position in society which such accomplishments are calculated to enliven and adorn. Thus the proud, who are also vain, will often stoop to very undignified means for the gratification of their love of attention and applause; and thus it was that Mr. Dalrymple wanted nothing so much as a legitimate title to the kind of distinction from which he often felt painfully that he was personally disqualified by the disadvantages of his early life; and thus it was, also, that he valued at something beyond their real worth, those easy manners, and that pleasing address, by which Arthur Hamilton obtained for himself a multitude of summer friends.

A deeper view into the mysteries of human life would have shown both him, and the master who favoured while he envied him, that the good manners and superficial attainments which recommended one of the party, were even less firm and stable in their hold upon public regard, than the more substantial charms of golden merit which recommended the other.

Another very important fact would have presented itself to the mind of Mr. Dalrymple while contemplating such a view, that scarcely any amount of early disadvantage, provided it were associated with *money-making talents*, and *money-spending tastes*, could have disqualified him for occupying the position to which his ambitious thoughts perpetually turned.

CHAPTER XXVIII.



HAD the occasion of Mrs. Frederick Ashley's pic-nic been the most important event in the whole range of the natural world, it could not have been ushered in by greater harmony of sound, and pomp of beauty, than prevailed throughout all nature—in grove and valley, earth and sky, on that bright morning, when the gay party, at an unusually early hour, set forth towards the scene of their anticipated enjoyment.

This was a ruined abbey, situated, as such ruins mostly are, by the side of a gentle river, and forming altogether one of the most picturesque and beautiful scenes to be found in this, or any other country. The distance of this peaceful and secluded spot from the large bustling town of M—— was the cause of such early rising; and the high-spirited horses having waited for some of the party longer than the patience of such animals can always endure, the whole cavalcade rolled and galloped away at an unusual speed along the broad and noble way, which led directly from the centre of the town through some of the most important, as well as the most regular and handsome of its streets.

Altogether there was such a trampling of horses' feet, and such a flutter of light dresses—for it was the height of summer—such a show of variously coloured parasols,

and such a blushing of sweet faces, and waving of glossy ringlets beneath; there was such an ambling and bounding of the equestrians who formed no inconsiderable portion of the whole display; that scarcely a window in the long streets through which they passed was unoccupied either by the idle butler, or loitering housemaid, or early risen young lady, who all ran eagerly to that point of view, in order to catch a glimpse of the bright scene ere it passed.

Of all the equestrians who joined the merry party, Arthur Hamilton, if he was not exactly the best-mounted, was the most admired, and conscious that he was so, he sometimes reined his steed, so as to throw even the unconscious animal into attitudes of display; or in the very exuberance of his own high spirits, he galloped on, too eager and impatient to keep time with cooler riders, and then came wheeling back to say his idle nothings to the ladies, or to discuss with other gentlemen the various excellencies of horse and hound. In short he was ready for anything, it scarcely mattered what; and having, in his foolish gambols, once upset a donkey laden with its panniers of greens, he tossed a half-sovereign to the driver, and away again, laughing heartily to think how the poor man would have to grope for his golden treasure amongst a heap of dust and stones which lay by the way side.

It was while thus amusing himself, that the eye of Arthur Hamilton was caught by a figure treading lightly along the footpath where he had seen that figure before. It seemed to him, at the moment, as if Kate Staunton must be the most perverse of all created beings, to be walking there at that precise time, to be wearing the most abominable of all squat bonnets too, and to be carrying again those insufferable books. It did not appear to

him altogether respectable for him to be seen speaking with a young woman under such circumstances; and yet what was he to do? He might have passed her by, and have seemed to be no wiser, had he been riding straightforward, as a sensible man would have ridden; but in wheeling round, he had drawn up his horse immediately in front of the path along which she was approaching, and already he could distinguish a smile upon her face, which betrayed that she had recognised him.

"So, so, my good fellow!" said he, apparently attempting to soothe and coax his horse, while he stroked it first on one side of the neck and then on the other, yet all the time making such use of a sharp curb as to throw it completely on its haunches, and set the ladies screaming as they passed him by. "Gently then, gently," he continued, and was actually so busy endeavouring to restrain its evident determination to plunge and rear, that even Kate could excuse him for not finding time to bid her so much as "Good morning" when he passed.

It was astonishing, however, how tractable the animal became so soon as he slackened the rein and struck off into a gallop. Not so, however, the feelings of the rider. He was not naturally cowardly, nor mean, beyond what selfish and thoughtless people always are, and he felt such a pang of self-contempt for the despicable artifice he had just been guilty of, and for his own heartlessness altogether, that he determined to ride back again, and say a kind word or two to his early and still faithful friend. With this intention he glanced along the road, first to ascertain that he should not be seen by the party if he stopped for that purpose; and watching the last carriage round a bend of the road, he turned his horse's head in the opposite direction, and striking his spurs into its sides,

was back again in a few minutes at the spot where Kate had been.

To his surprise, however, she was not there, nor anywhere upon the road that he could see. She must have sunk into the earth, thought he. But immediately he recollected that the residence of Mr. Reynolds was in that neighbourhood, and, looking towards a gateway and plantation leading from the public road into some private grounds, he saw the flutter of a shawl as the figure of Kate disappeared amongst the shrubs.

Arthur Hamilton was quite satisfied. He had done what he considered his duty. His conscience was set at rest, and he was soon again the foremost in the cavalcade, and apparently the gayest and the happiest of the whole party.

There had never been any kind of intimacy between Arthur Hamilton, and Dorothy, who was now spoken of only as the *bride*—that word of doubtful meaning! They had often met in company, but, except the exchange of a few commonplace civilities, their acquaintance went no further, nor under any circumstances would it have been likely to go far. In fact, their characters did not harmonize. Dorothy's was too strong, and deep, and passionate, for Arthur. He liked easy-going people, who made him feel comfortable, and were comfortable themselves; and certainly this was not Dorothy's point of excellence.

Those who value the *eclat* attending on a bride, ought to take into account that there are certain humiliations connected therewith. They ought to take into account that the bride is nothing of herself, that the dress, the outfit, and the appurtenances which belong to her, and especially the position which she occupies, are all; that on this, above all other occasions of her life, she must

avoid thinking or acting for herself, that she must be, and do, exactly what others decide upon as best for her, eschewing eccentricity in every form—in short, that the nearer she resembles an elegantly dressed automaton, the safer will be her character and position; and the less condemnation will be mingled with the remarks which the mere appearance of a bride in any social circle is sure to call forth.

So far as these circumstances were calculated to produce a humiliating sense of personal and characteristic annihilation, no one could have felt them more sensibly than the bride, who formed the centre of attraction on the present occasion. Very dry, and dull, and wearisome indeed to her, were all the officious attentions, the heartless homage, and the empty common-place which filled the atmosphere around her, with a certain incense, it is true, but an incense as unflattering to her vanity, as could possibly have been offered. How to escape from it all, was often the wild wish of her heart; and sometimes, when she looked from the windows of her drawing-room, and caught the view of some rustic figure in the field, or some humble traveller along the road, she longed to borrow their time-worn habiliments, and so to escape, no matter how, so long as she accomplished her desire to be away—away!

Perpetual excitement in her case, however, as well as in thousands of similar ones, was the unfailing resource to which she applied for the purpose of smothering down unwelcome thoughts, and her present position was highly favourable to the use of this popular cordial. An unmeaning round of parties, and pleasures, occupied every day, and a large portion of every night; so that there was literally no time to think, except about the actual

transactions of the moment; and, what was perhaps of more importance, no time to *feel* whether such transactions were satisfactory or not.

All this Dorothy persuaded herself was answering very well. At any rate, time flew on; and that was something. She was amused, too, with the pageantry which flitted before her, and her taste was highly gratified with the many beautiful objects by which she was surrounded. But an excursion into the country had still to be tried; and as she leaned indolently back in the open carriage which her husband was driving, for he delighted in nothing so much as driving his own horses, and persuading himself that no other hand was skilful enough to manage them—as she reclined indolently, then, in the soft luxurious carriage that rolled with rapid but delicious motion along the broad and level road, she began to find a little thinking time upon her hands, which it was difficult to employ in a manner at all agreeable to herself. The very sight of the sunshine and the shadows, the green fields, and the luxuriant trees, with flowery hedge-rows, orchards, and rural cottages; the branches of tall elms where the road turned off into winding lanes, sometimes almost meeting overhead; and then amongst the tall smooth stems of lofty beeches, the sun-light glancing through; and high above, the light green tints of sheltered foliage, the sound of wood-pigeons cooing in the boughs; and squirrels, startled by the tramp of horses and the roll of carriage wheels, running their race of terror, or of play, amongst the furze and broom, and then up to where the startled pigeons stretched their wings to fly—all these impressions, as the carriage rolled along, fell softly, sweetly, on the soul of her who gazed and listened, altogether lost in the deep silence of unutterable thought; until at times the startling

commonplace of stranger minds reminded her that *here* she was alone—especially, with that one mind to which she had bound herself for ever, she must *for ever be alone*.

Feeling this more forcibly than ever, now that nature's page of beauty lay so widely open before her—feeling that *he* could never read that page, nor understand its meaning, Dorothy would almost have proposed turning back into the busy haunts of every-day existence, rather than pursuing that delicious ride, which, as their course led more and more into the retirement of the country, became every moment more beautiful and picturesque.

At last the outline of a venerable ruin began to be discoverable in a deep, rich valley, still far in the distance; and as the scenery around the situation opened out upon the view, especially as a blue line of winding river glanced out here and there amongst the deep green of embowering foliage, there were other admirers besides Dorothy, who could not restrain their expressions of delight, though uttered in language to her ear so foreign, and inadequate to the occasion, that she did not deem it worth her while to acknowledge them even by the slightest response.

“Alone! alone!” That was the language of *her* heart. Alone, and yet a bride! surrounded by flatterers in their small way, beset with attentions which expressed no sympathy, and conveyed no kindness to her heart, her countenance grew dark and sad; for her eye was feasting upon nature, her ear was drinking in the deep harmonies of creation, and yet her soul was solitary as if she had been travelling through a desert; for beneath the hollow and heartless attentions which surrounded her with splendour, which made her the queen of a little court, the centre of a crowd, the admired of all beholders, the treasured object of profoundest interest to a troop of friends, she knew

and felt that she was still alone—that, in her individual character, she was no more to those admirers, flatterers, and friends, than a mere acquaintance of the moment never heard of before; and that in reality the veriest automaton ever put in motion, if adorned in her habiliments, and seated in her distinguished place, could command as much of their attention as they were now rendering to her, simply because she was the bride of a wealthy man, whose tastes were reputed to be elegant, and whose means of gratifying them were said to be without bounds.

Such was the mood in which Dorothy responded, if she did so at all, to those commonplace appeals to her admiration which persons who fancy they are addressing genius with an artist's eye are accustomed to utter; and well might the bride be forgiven if she did no more than answer with a slight assenting nod, whenever her attention was thus called to the scenery around; for of all the empty nothings ever put into the form of language, surely those are the least endurable which are addressed *prepense* by common minds to a supposed artist, poet, or genius of any other kind.

So Dorothy remained very much shut up within herself; not admiring anything, as the party supposed, and by no means the lively, interesting person they had expected her to be. Some of them, in fact, had heard that her artistic tastes were all affectation, and they now began to think it must be so—all put on, no doubt, for the purpose of ensnaring Mr. Ashley, under the belief that she could share in his pleasures, and assist in arranging the embellishments of his villa. “Well, poor young man, he would find out his mistake now. The wonder was he had not found it out before.”

Perhaps there are no people in the world to whom so

little charity is shown, as those who have stepped suddenly out of poor families into the possession of riches; and pleasant as it was to society in general to be paying court to the bride of Frederiek Ashley, that bride herself, in her simple and personal identity, was remarked upon, and criticised, with as much bitterness as if in stepping into easy and affluent circumstances, she had deprived others of their right to do so.

With all this, however, Dorothy was too well acquainted to risk her popularity by a frequent indulgence of moods of temper and feeling like that which on the present occasion closed her lips, and overshadowed her brow. Even now, on arriving at the place of destination, alighting from the carriage, and mixing with the party in general, she laid aside her moodiness, and by an effort more than usually energetic, plunged at once into the liveliest conversation, and took the lead in whatever had to be explored, admired, or wondered at. While there was anything actually to be done, Dorothy was equal to the task—it was that easy rolling ride, with its soft lulling sensation, and the rapid change of objects flitting by without any exertion of her own, in order to see them in their bright succession, which had deprived her of the power to act her part; but she was now herself again, and with that commanding look and manner, which no one, now that she was a bride, pretended to dispute, she took upon herself the ordering and arranging of the whole party, disposing of their time at her own pleasure, and leading them to whatever point or place she herself was led by the fancy of the moment.

In this eager quest of what was interesting or picturesque, Dorothy had been a little premature, for the gentlemen had left the carriages and horses before sufficient

precaution had been taken for their security and accommodation; the grooms and other attendants upon the party being by no means adequate to the services required. Thus, while Dorothy led the way up a steep and rugged ascent, which was to enable the party to scale a broken wall of the Abbey, there was a scene of confusion in the valley below, which would, had it been observed, have speedily recalled many of those admirers of the picturesque to the more important considerations of broken bridles, harness, and carriages; to say nothing of injuries real or apprehended to their property in various boasted animals, perhaps altogether quite as highly esteemed, as the gentle beings tripping with faltering feet beside them.

At last a shout was heard with sufficient distinctness to arrest the attention of the whole party, and it tested so suddenly the gallantry of some of the gentlemen, that, altogether forgetful of the ladies who now stood trembling on those rude heights, they bounded away down the crumbling and precipitous bank, and were soon lost to the anxious gaze of their fair companions, who, seeing no further chance of assistance, effected their own descent with much more rapidity than would have been the case, had the gentlemen remained to render them further assistance.

It might afford an interesting study of character, to ascertain amongst a mixed party under circumstances of sudden fright, and having half ascended an eminence, who would continue to ascend, and who would rush down again. On the present occasion Dorothy was the only one who steadily pursued her object, urged onward by the same alarm which had sent all the other ladies screaming and tottering over the loosened stones and tangled weeds, down into the very scene of danger and confusion, where terrified horses, and broken carriages, rendered the alarm

perhaps even greater than the reality of the catastrophe demanded.

Whether her purpose was to escape these sights and sounds, or whether she was still bent upon attaining the object which had first pleased her fancy, Dorothy went clambering on, until at last she gained a position from whence she could see directly into the central part of the ruin, a spacious area now covered with soft green verdure; and although long since laid open to the sun and stars above, still nearly enclosed on every side by massive walls, opening only here and there into noble and magnificent archways, through which the rays of the sunshine were stealing upon broken columns, and earthy mounds, and trellis-work of rambling plants; while the deeper recesses were thrown into darker shade by contrast with the green and golden tints which variegated the sunny spots.

Dorothy had seen so little of nature, of rural scenery, or of picturesque effect of any description, except as it may be contemplated in works of art, and even in that form her sphere of observation had been very limited; she had actually seen so little of what her imagination was always whispering to her of beauty and enchantment; that, like a blind enthusiast whose sight is suddenly and miraculously restored, she stood and gazed upon the scene, almost fearing that it would be dispelled, should any sound of her adventurous foot disturb the silence and solemnity which reigned around.

The interior of the ruin, however, was not unoccupied. A goat with her two kids was browsing amongst the bushes which grew in undisturbed security about the aisles where reverend feet in former times had trod; and one solitary human figure, an artist seated at his work, attracted the attention of Dorothy, and made her wish

that she was herself like that obscure, and perhaps unfriended being, cherished in the very bosom of nature, and drinking at the life-spring of beauty, rather than the gay and honoured bride who could not move without a retinue of followers, nor speak, nor look, without exciting the pretence of being regarded and observed, if not absolutely admired.

Determined, if possible, yet farther to explore this enchanting scene, and fearing to be discovered where she stood, and so pursued or called back by the party it was so much her wish to escape from for a while, Dorothy tried first the firmness of one stepping-stone, and then another—first the toughness of a twig round which to grasp her fingers, and then the firmness of a root on which to place her foot; and thus by exercising a little patience, added to a strong determination, she gained at last a line of abrupt and almost unbroken wall, from whence a single leap would place her on the smooth sward, which from above had looked so inviting to the tread.

It was rather an awkward situation to be caught in by the eye of any man, and Dorothy glanced towards the artist, hoping that he would neither see nor hear her movements until she should have safely reached the ground. To her satisfaction he appeared still intent upon his work; so with one attempt to clear herself from the surrounding fern and brambles, she dropped from the wall upon the bank below. Unfortunately her bridal dress was but ill calculated for such an exploit. The delicate fabric in its multitudinous folds had caught the rough stones of the wall already loosened by the lapse of time, and such a crash and crumbling ensued, followed by the pattering of mortar and rubbish, that no man seated where the artist was, however intent upon his work, could

have remained insensible to the fact of some great catastrophe having occurred within those hitherto silent walls.

It was not a very romantic situation for a heroine to be found in—prone—squat upon the ground, her blushing face almost covered with the dust of ancient mortar, her bonnet flattened to a most eccentric angle on one side, and her elegant drapery “Bedabbl’d with the dew, and torn with briars;” and altogether, so strong was Dorothy’s sense of the ridiculous, connected with such a performance on the part of a bride, that her laughter entirely overcame her embarrassment in the presence of a stranger, and for some time rendered it impossible for her to offer any explanation of her situation to the wondering artist, who had very naturally run to the scene of the catastrophe, immediately on discovering signs of life amongst the heap of fallen stones and rubbish.

But had Dorothy been severely hurt as well as startled, she would in all probability have laughed, and that the more for the exceedingly grave countenance, and melancholy condoling manner of the artist, who saw nothing in the least degree entertaining in the fall of a lady from a high wall. In fact, it seems to require a purely English constitution to extract amusement from any mal-occurrences of this description; and the young man who ran to the rescue of Dorothy on the present occasion was an Italian, not an Englishman.

He was an Italian so little acquainted with the language of the country in which he was lingering, that all attempts at explanation between himself and the lady, only rendered their unexpected interview the more embarrassing; and Dorothy was glad to shake off the dust from her dress, and arrange her disordered hair, and exhibit other symptoms of safety and well-being, to assure the gentleman

that she was not seriously injured; while he, bowing himself way, went back to pursue his work.

But during that short interview the countenance and manner of the artist had made a strong impression on the mind of Dorothy, for he had those peculiarly large dark eyes, which young ladies generally understand to be Italian; though the traveller, on visiting that country, is often surprised to find how much it abounds in eyes of a very different description. In the present instance, however the effect was purely Italian, even after the most approved young ladies' fashion; for there was the clear, pale, sallow complexion, long, black, and flowing hair, thin nose of Grecian mould, with other embellishments to masculine attractiveness which admit of no classical definition, but on which the hearts of men of modern times seem more intently set, than on those lines of beauty which the touch of ancient art has rendered imperishable. Suffice it then, that from the moustache downwards, or rather from the crown of his head, surmounted by a cap with drooping tassel, the figure that stepped forward to assist Dorothy in her dilemma, was purely Italian.

"And yet I cannot speak to him," said she to herself, after her laugh was ended. "I cannot exchange with him so much as the commonest civility in return for his polite and ready assistance. It is the curse of my life that I have been shut out from everything that would have placed me on a level with those whom I was born to associate with."

Dorothy was right. Her ignorance, her want of resources within herself, her unoccupied mind, had driven her upon the pitiful and meagre substitute of excitement as a means of filling up the void of her own heart; and stilling, if she could not satisfy, its perpetual cravings.

Besides which she walked the earth so blind to its realities, she contemplated everything through a medium so false, that not only did she picture in what her ambition pointed to, charms and perfections which a closer acquaintance would have effectually dispelled; but what was of more consequence, she failed from the same reason to understand herself; and, because she understood no other person she had no real test by which to try her own actions, feelings, and motives.

Bitterly then did Dorothy reproach her father, or if not her father, her fate, which had placed her at so great a disadvantage with all that she pined to be, and to possess in life. Disturbed by these thoughts, dissatisfied, and moody, yet half enjoying the solitude by which she now felt herself surrounded, and glad to have escaped for a few moments at last from the pressure and annoyance of uncongenial minds, she loitered amongst the scattered ruins and wild verdure, sometimes seating herself upon a green mound, and sometimes looking towards that silent artist, and wishing there were any channel of communication through which she could make herself and her passionate love of his art, intelligible to him. Somewhere or other she had met with these simple lines, and as she mused and wandered to and fro, they rose perpetually to her lips—

“ We sat beneath a ruined arch,
That Roman girl and I;
I could not speak the silver words
That on her lips did lie.
“ But eyes converse, and ours beheld
The same bright earth and sky;
And thus we spoke, and thus we felt,
That Roman girl and I.”

But the meditations of the bride were abruptly terminated by a loud shout from one of the arched windows, where a group of merry faces looked in, astonished and delighted at having been first to discover her retreat. A bet had been made by Arthur Hamilton that he would be the first to find the bride; and, eager in this pursuit, he had rushed, with half the party after him, to a different quarter of the ruins, while the opposing party had directed their steps to this fortunate issue. Loud and triumphant, therefore, were the shoutings which announced this event, and when the two parties met, and Arthur had to draw out his last sovereign, he laughed as heartily as the rest, for he had still the five pounds remaining which had been borrowed from his friend on the previous day.

There is no saying what a party thus excited may not do. The next thing was to rush upon the artist, to crowd around him, and to look rudely over his work, some actually laying hold of a portfolio which rested against a heap of stones behind him, and daring their companions to look also at that. But here Dorothy interposed, and rescuing the portfolio from their hands, with that look of authority which few persons ventured to dispute, she returned it inviolate to its rightful owner, who bowed more gracefully than before, and indicated by his expressive looks the gratitude which he would have found it difficult to utter in any other language than his own.

A little brought to their sober senses by the rebuke implied in Dorothy's manner, the party now began to explain to her some of the circumstances which had taken place during her separation from her friends. There had in fact been a much more disastrous scene beyond the walls of the Abbey than she was prepared to expect from the looks and the conduct of her friends, although now

that the subject was touched upon again, some of the ladies did certainly begin to be exceedingly shocked and horrified, and one or two went so far as to beg that it might not be renewed, as they were quite incapable of hearing the description again.

"But what is it?" said Dorothy, with her usual impatience. "I must know what has happened. Who has been killed?"

"Not quite killed," answered one or two voices; "only a broken leg, and a dislocated wrist."

"Whose leg is broken?" asked Dorothy again, "and where is he?"

"Only one of the hired coachmen," said the voices again; "nobody that you care anything about."

"But I *do* care about him," said Dorothy; "and I must see what has become of him."

"Impossible!" exclaimed the party again. "It is too shocking. You will never be able to endure so dreadful a spectacle: no doubt he is well attended to. You have no occasion to give yourself the slightest trouble about him. Indeed it would be quite unsuitable—improper—we cannot allow it."

But as they continued in this manner to plead, and to reason after their fashion, Dorothy walked straight on in her determined manner towards the place which she supposed to be the scene of the disaster; and when, finding it impossible to divert her attention from this purpose, Arthur Hamilton offered her his arm, and politely conducted her to the cottage to which the wounded man had been conveyed, and where he now lay writhing in agony, and awaiting the arrival of the surgeon, for whom a messenger had been immediately sent off on one of the unruly horses.

The bride was not, like her more sensitive female friends, prevented by the acuteness of her feelings from using her common sense, even on an occasion of this nature; so walking towards the bed upon which the poor man had been laid, she began immediately to adjust his pillows, and to make other arrangements calculated to afford temporary relief; for it seemed to her that, either through the ignorance or the carelessness of his attendants, he had been placed pretty much as he would have been, had the express object been to increase, and not to alleviate his sufferings.

It was naturally a great satisfaction to Dorothy to witness the success of her own endeavours; and so much pleased were the gentlemen with her good sense, activity, and strength of mind, that they not only crowded into the apartment, but became really anxious to assist in the good work, each endeavouring to surpass the others in solicitude to fetch and carry, or to execute whatever they were directed to do by the bride, in the most expeditious and efficient manner.

Nor was this fever of benevolence confined to the gentlemen only. Shocked as the ladies were, that Dorothy should think of exposing herself to scenes so revolting and dreadful, they also began to peep into the interior of the cottage; and though at first even the faintest glimpse of the suffering form seemed to drive them back, to cover their eyes, and declare they could not look again, they came by degrees to stand a little way within the door, where, seeing how the gentlemen were all enlisted in Dorothy's service, and evidently esteeming it an honour to stand foremost with anything she might express a wish for in their hands, and even with many things for which she had neither wish nor use, the ladies also caught the in-

fection, and with their heads all running upon heroines in the field of battle, soft cambric handkerchiefs were torn for bandages, and offered by white hands that scarcely could be kept, only from the press of numbers, from swathing the poor man from head to foot. In fact, Dorothy had serious apprehensions that the well-known scene of Queen Eleanor was about to be enacted, to such an extraordinary height had the enthusiasm risen, before the arrival of the doctor, who, happily for his patient, soon succeeded in clearing the apartment by assuming his proper post, and taking the sole responsibility into his own hands.

As the party retired from the cottage, however, the same excitement continued to prevail, the same desire to be foremost in good works; and Dorothy led the way to a practical illustration of this feeling, by exclaiming, "The best thing we can do now, is to make a subscription for this poor man. Here, Mr. Hamilton, you shall take my bag, and see what you can collect; only remember this, the office of collecting from others will not excuse you from giving yourself."

Dorothy said this with a laugh so pleasant and good humoured, that it would have been impossible for her words to offend; and as she did so, she placed in the hands of Arthur a beautifully embroidered bag, into which she let the company see that she dropped ten pounds. Whether the bearer of the bag was piqued by the words, or flattered by the choice of himself as her agent, he followed up this munificent donation with the five which Arnold had lent him, he also taking care to let the company see what he did.

To some of the party it was a very disagreeable kind of precedent, and to others a very inconvenient one; but

they followed it up with considerable spirit, until a sum was collected for which many a poor man would be willing to endure a temporary disability to work, if not actual mutilation and pain. And this man was but an idle, dissolute fellow after all; so that no sooner were the restrictions of surgical care withdrawn, than his ruling passion was indulged to such an excess, that his wife and children in the end had more to suffer in consequence of this ill judged and unbounded liberality, than they had ever suffered before from poverty and neglect.



CHAPTER XXIX.

ARTHUR," said Arnold Lee to his friend one day, about a fortnight from the time of the party to the Abbey, which has already been described, "I am in great want of five pounds just now. I suppose you can accommodate me with my money back again?"

Arthur Hamilton laughed; but he looked a little embarrassed notwithstanding; for there is nothing, as the world goes, more conducive to blushing and shamefacedness than an entire destitution of money.

"I believe I must have it," said Arnold, becoming still more serious.

"Not from me," replied his friend, growing irritable in proportion to his consciousness of not having acted in the wisest manner possible, to say nothing of the principle involved.

Arnold reminded him that he had spoken with confidence of a supply expected in a week from the time of the loan; but he shook his head, and there was no hope.

"I must have it," said Arnold, colouring to his very temples, "even if you sell your horse to pay me; and I will tell you why." But before he could explain himself, he saw that this inadvertent allusion to the horse had

operated like a spark thrown amongst gunpowder. Arthur knew well that he had no more business with a horse than his friend. He knew also that a large portion of the borrowed money had been actually thrown away, when it was not his own; and even at the moment of his ostentatious generosity, he was fully aware that one pound would have been in reality a kindler boon to the poor man than five.

As blame insinuated is always more offensive than when fully expressed, and as all tempers are the most irritable when burdened with a consciousness of blame deserved; so that of Arthur Hamilton, never the most patient or reasonable, burst forth into such uncontrollable excess, that he even gave utterance, almost unconsciously, to reproaches and taunts, too plainly implying, that but for Arnold and his family, he should have still enjoyed the privilege of riding, when, and in what manner he liked, without offence to any man.

Arnold felt painfully the folly of his inadvertent allusion. He felt also the meanness and want of right feeling which such an allusion implied; but he felt at the same time his own entire innocence—nay, his incapability of such feelings as his friend was now without stint or scruple laying to his charge; and but for the exercise of a lately acquired self-command, learned in the hard school of disappointment and trial, his temper also would have given way, and his passion in all probability would have exceeded that of his companion in violence, just in the same proportion that his feelings were deeper and stronger.

As it was, Arnold bit his lip, and remained silent until there were symptoms of the storm beginning to abate. He then turned calmly to his friend, and said “Nevertheless, Arthur, I must have my money. It is not for

myself that I ask it, but for my mother. I am not a prosperous man like you, looking forward to advancement, and probably to wealth. I am browbeaten and ground down by everybody with whom I have any money transactions. But I know what I have, and I live accordingly. It is the will of God that I should bear the reproach and dishonour of my father's guilt, and of that I desire not to complain. Say on, then, everything bitter and humiliating that you can heap upon my head; I have borne worse than you can utter—worse than your imagination can devise. It is but a little thing to me to be charged by you with feelings from which my very soul revolts, because you know me better than to believe your own words; but it is a great thing to me to be unable to meet some payments now due on my mother's account, because it will place her in circumstances of humiliation and difficulty, such as it is the study of my life to preserve her from. I do not know what you have done with that little sum, but I know that it was a mine of hoarded wealth to me; and I should have thought, amongst your many friends, that you could easily have had it replaced by a loan for a few days at least."

"Friends!" exclaimed Arthur, contemptuously, as the thought struck him how few there were amongst the circle of his popularity of whom he could ask a kindness—"friends!" he repeated. "You know that I have not one besides yourself."

"Then you should have been the more scrupulous in keeping your faith with me," replied Arnold.

"I should," said Arthur, now that his passion had spent itself, beginning for the first time to be willing to acknowledge the truth. "But seeing that I have not, what then?"

"You must borrow of those who have plenty, and repay a poor destitute wretch like me," replied Arnold.

"And so lose my credit," exclaimed Arthur.

"We have only to choose betwixt the loss of your credit and the loss of mine," said Arnold. "I don't think I can afford to lose much in that way; for it seems I don't stand very high in the opinion of my employers, at any rate. And that reminds me that there is another small account to be settled betwixt you and me, relating especially to credit. May I ask whether you have yet done me justice with Sir James and Mr. Dalrymple?"

"In what respect?" asked Arthur, who had entirely forgotten the subject.

"I am ashamed," replied Arnold, "to refer again to so childish a matter; but right is right, in things small as well as great, and I don't see how you can be satisfied to be still considered by these two gentlemen as the originator of the plan upon which I am about to act as their servant, and perhaps as yours."

"Oh! exactly," said Arthur, now recalling all the particulars. "I perfectly comprehend you, and I am only sorry the thing escaped my memory before. It is a childish business, as you say, and looks rather awkward for me to be meddling with, now that the misapprehension has gone on so long."

"And yet," said Arnold, "it must be done."

"*Must!*" repeated his friend. "Do you mean to threaten me!" And again his flashing eyes and heightened colour plainly indicated that he was much more in the mood for quarrelling with his friend, than for doing him any kind of justice that would be likely to operate to his own disadvantage.

"Arthur Hamilton," said Arnold, summoning all the

sternness of his nature to his aid, and this time it was determination not temper which gave him nerve, "if you are playing with me, and trampling upon my rights, because you consider me a fallen man, and because from a momentary whim you are placed in a position above me, I tell you plainly, that old as our friendship is, and true as it has been, I will hold it as nothing—as worse than nothing—for I will cast it from me as I throw away this weed, esteeming it of no higher value. What are you to me more than other men, if you fail to deal honourably by me? I can forgive your levity—your want of thought; and I *did* forgive it, when I stood like a common thief or liar, to be mocked and insulted by those men; but your deliberate evasion I will not forgive; and friendless as I have long been but for you, I will now be friendless entirely and for ever, rather than acknowledge anything beyond the merest acquaintance with a man who is turned about by every breath of the world's opinion, and who would rather subject his friend to injury and contempt than lose one particle of the capricious favour of the world.'

"You make fine speeches, Arnold," said his friend, rising up from a low bank upon which he had cast himself, "and I am not going to dispute the reasonableness of what you say. The long and the short of the matter is simply this—that your code of honour is higher than mine, and that I am not worthy of you. I wish I could help you, but I don't exactly see how."

"I don't ask you for help," replied Arnold. "I only ask you for justice."

"And justice," said his friend, "is sometimes more difficult to render than help. But I will not forget my duty again, believe me. I shall see Sir James to-morrow, and—"

"To-morrow? Why not to-day?" said Arnold. "Do you believe I would rest an hour before I had done justice to you, or to any other man under such circumstances?"

"I should look such a fool," said Arthur, "riding up to Waverton on purpose."

"And I looked like a scoundrel—a swindler; and they see me still in the same light," said Arnold, "and will see me so, until you tell them the whole truth. My word went for nothing. They naturally thought the man who could appropriate his friend's invention, could steal his purse, and swear to anything; consequently, the more I said in my own defence, the worse their opinion of me became."

It was evident from this conversation that the two friends were not sufficiently alike in their manner of looking at and thinking of things in general, to remain much longer on the same intimate terms which had united them in boyhood; for although Arthur, before mounting his horse to ride back to the town, had made the most solemn promises that no time should be lost before both duties were fully discharged, and had even gone so far as to declare that he should hate himself until his conscience was clear on these points; such was his habitual thoughtlessness, and such his easy forgetfulness of what presented no interest for the moment, that whether he did discharge these duties or not depended upon the merest chance—in short, upon whether he met with anything else to engage his attention before he had an opportunity of making the clear conscience, which at one time he had imagined himself to be desiring above all other things.

To Arnold the disappointment was as severe as it was humiliating, to find in the friend of his boyhood this

laxity of principle on points which tested even the security of his friendship; and repelled and driven back from this once stronghold of his affections, he began to yield to a misanthropic feeling, and to fancy that no man was worth caring for, "nor woman either," because he had himself in two instances been deceived. It was the natural reaction of an ardent nature recoiling back upon itself, and at that distressing moment the sensation was accompanied by a strong conviction that never, through the whole course of his future life, should he "love as he had loved, or be what he had been."

"It will be heavy work labouring through a long life, according to the plan upon which I am living now," said Arnold to himself, that night as he sat in the common room of the little inn, watching, with almost unconscious gaze, the passing to and fro of its humble occupants; and as his thoughts assumed a more definite form, he began to wonder whether he should ever escape the low drudgery of his humiliating position. Not that he shrunk from labour or exertion, or would have preferred a life of indolence had such been offered to his choice; but he was conscious of the possession of so many faculties for which there was no employment in his present lot, that without any overweening estimate of his own good qualities, it was still no more than reasonable that he should in some degree regard himself as a buried, lost, or wasted being. He knew that he had strong and warm affections, but who cared for these now that he was poor and friendless. He knew that he had strength of resolution and energy of soul to serve and suffer for those whom he esteemed and loved; but all pretension to nobility of heart and character was looked upon as mere assumption in one borne down and degraded like himself. He knew that

he had no mean capabilities of head, as well as heart; but the lowest drudgery, and the merest execution of the commands of others was deemed sufficient for him, and all to which he had any title to aspire. He knew that he was unimpeachable in his integrity, and capable of undeviating adherence to a trust, but no human being seemed willing to believe or to confide in him, because his father had been false. In short, the high and honourable principle which formed the basis of his own existence, which supported him under every trial, and not unfrequently enabled him to rise superior to the petty annoyances and vexations of a low and humiliating position amongst his fellow men—this very principle, it was evident, must pass for little or nothing with the world, so long as he remained obscure and undistinguished.

Of all the disheartening aspects which disfigure the surface of society, this is perhaps the most repulsive to a young, ardent, and honourable mind. It needs a long experience to enable us to look beneath this surface; but seeing there the under-currents of man's life—the hidden influences which operate upon his character and feelings, we cool down in time from the high fever which burns to oppose, to overcome, and finally to correct; and from our own wants and weakness we learn to pity and forgive.

Arnold Lee had not yet learned this lesson. His experience had reached only the stage of dissatisfaction, disgust, and almost hatred of the world. It was not his natural tendency to be morbid or desponding, still less to yield to that moodiness of temper which now for the first time in his life seemed threatening to destroy his energy, and with that his satisfaction and his peace.

On the evening already described he was more than usually beset with feelings of this nature; and, tired of

the low company at the inn, for this was a day for the assembling of one of those meetings or clubs in which Morton was accustomed to take so prominent a part, Arnold left the heated room where the tumult of discontented spirits made the atmosphere still more difficult to inhale with satisfaction; and tempted out by a clear moon, just breaking over the trees which formed the boundary of a little orchard adjoining the premises, he sauntered on so far as to be beyond hearing of the rude voices in the public room of the inn; and having escaped from these, leaned back against one of the apple-trees, for he was weary alike in mind and body, and cared not to exert himself to extend his walk to any further distance.

While musing in this quiet spot, and with his own figure entirely concealed by the shadow of the tree, Arnold's attention was attracted by the sound of moving feet, not very distant from the place where he stood. It was likely that travellers should be coming to the inn at that time of the evening, for it was a place of general resort to the operatives employed about the works on the shore; and it was likely too that the occasion of the assembly of *hands* for that evening should attract numbers from the surrounding villages, to join in the animal excitement likely to be enjoyed; if not also in the political regeneration of the world, in furtherance of which the assembly was to meet. The movement of these steps, however, was not like those of travellers. They were fitful, stealthy, and sometimes loitering to and fro, as if awaiting something which was to decide their further progress. At last voices were also heard, but whispering, and low; and had not Arnold detected the name of Morton he would have made his presence known, in order to warn the speakers that they were likely to be overheard.

The cause of Arnold's earnest attention, after hearing the name of this man, was that he had lately entertained some rather uncomfortable suspicions of his character and secret purposes, suspicions greatly increased by the fact of his being unable to understand him, or to make any progress in gaining his confidence. He saw, too, that like many of the misanthropic race, he only hated the world so far as it hated him; and that public opinion was just as influential with him as with other men, who made no pretence to despise it. One thing especially had struck the mind of Arnold with serious apprehension—it was that he loved no one, trusted no one; nor, so far as he could yet discover, was there any soft or yielding place in his heart to which helplessness might appeal for mercy, or suffering for redress. It is true, he had shown what he could undertake and carry through for the benefit of his fellow-beings, on the occasion of the shipwreck; but even that seemed as if done more in contempt for the inefficiency of others, more for the sake of exhibiting his own superiority in manliness and power, than from any feeling of compassion or benevolence. All the ground which Arnold had for hoping that his heart was not entirely depraved and cruel, was a certain distant sort of kindness towards the poor widow woman who occupied the cottage by the side of the river; but even to her his services were so covertly performed, and if acknowledged were so sullenly and abruptly given up, that little kindness appeared to be blended with the feelings by which they were dictated; and altogether Arnold would have been better satisfied had any sufficient reason come to light for obtaining the dismissal of this man from the service in which he was at present engaged.

Arnold therefore remained in his place beneath the

tree, while those who were loitering, or rather waiting near the spot, went on with their mysterious conversation, which evidently related to some purpose about to be carried out by Morton and his friends. There had been during the previous winter much discontent, and also much suffering amongst the labouring classes in that neighbourhood; and a most alarming and irrational idea had obtained footing amongst them, that the introduction of machinery was the cause of all the complicated evils under which they laboured. Nor was machinery the only imaginary enemy against which their execrations were directed. Any one who accumulated wealth by the labour of the poor, or any one who hoarded property, was sure to fall under the ban of these discontented spirits, who formed themselves into companies so numerous and powerful as to accomplish the destruction of a vast amount of valuable property.

A genial summer and promising harvest had now in some measure allayed the irritation of the previous winter, but Morton and some of his congenial associates were not likely to let the feeling die quietly away; and while there were many really satisfied about the conduct of public affairs, upon the ground that they themselves had work and food, there were still a few remaining of darker, and perhaps deeper thinking men, who having once started the great question of inequality, unfairness in the general distribution of wealth, and consequent injury and oppression, could not so easily settle down after the tumult of previous excitement.

"He is late to-night," said one of the voices to which Arnold was now listening.

"He had a long way to go, you know," observed another.





"Let me see, where does it lie?" said the first speaker.

"It lies," replied the other, "just over against Marton-in-the-Dale. Not that I ever was there myself, but I had an uncle, a cattle-dealer, that used to go a good deal into that neighbourhood."

"Does Morton know the place, should you think?" said one.

"No doubt," replied the other. "He knows every place, it seems to me."

"And does he know for certain that they're hoarding up the whole of last year's corn against a time of scarcity, when prices will be high again?"

"He told me so. That's all my knowledge in the matter. But if he didn't know before, he will to-night."

And true it was that Morton had gone out on an exploring expedition that evening, and, at the very time these men were talking, he was prowling like a beast of prey around a spot, as peaceful, as its occupants were all unconscious of a thought or act of injury against any member of the whole creation.

It was evening at Hatherstone, and Margaret was seated as usual in her own secluded apartment opening out upon the terrace which bounded and overlooked her flower-garden. The door of this apartment was thrown open to admit the pleasant scents and sounds, and the space below, where the little fountain was always tinkling, was redolent of sweets; and all around, from tree to tree, there were the answering notes of thrush and blackbird, scarcely finding time to sleep for very fullness of deep joy, and therefore, though the dews were falling, and deep shadows lengthening on the ground, still eloquent in song. It would have been impossible to live surrounded by such sights and sounds, and not find sweet companionship

amongst them, and therefore Margaret often kept her door unclosed until the hour was late; for seldom did the fear of harm invade the quiet of her peaceful breast.

Thus she sat alone, and yet surrounded by society. The flowers, her loved companions, ever present with their welcome odours, and the soft whispering sounds in harmony with twilight and silvery dews—all these had fellowship for her; and thoughts that never wearied came with the close of every day, and made each evening happier than the last.

There is often a strong and prevalent belief amongst the poor, that the rich, or those who are reputed so, live always amongst scenes of revelry and unlimited indulgence. Perhaps their own enjoyments are so much of this nature, that they scarcely think there *can* be liberty of action, especially wealth to spend without restraint, and not immense provision for eating, drinking, luxury; and consequent rejoicing of glad hearts, and appetites abundantly supplied. It was but natural that rumour should speak largely of the amount of wealth bequeathed to the widow of old Mr. Staunton; and it was equally natural, that amongst a certain class, the expenditure at Hatherstone should be supposed to be profuse, extravagant, and luxurious beyond all bounds. A scene of constant revelry was pictured there; and people made themselves more sure it must be so, because the sole proprietor now was a being originally of their own order; and therefore they spoke enviously, and grudged her this elevation to the privileges of perpetual and unlimited enjoyment, such as their hearts were always coveting.

Whether Morton had really imbibed the popular idea or not, his embassy on the evening in question was to ascertain the amount of food which it was rumoured Mar-

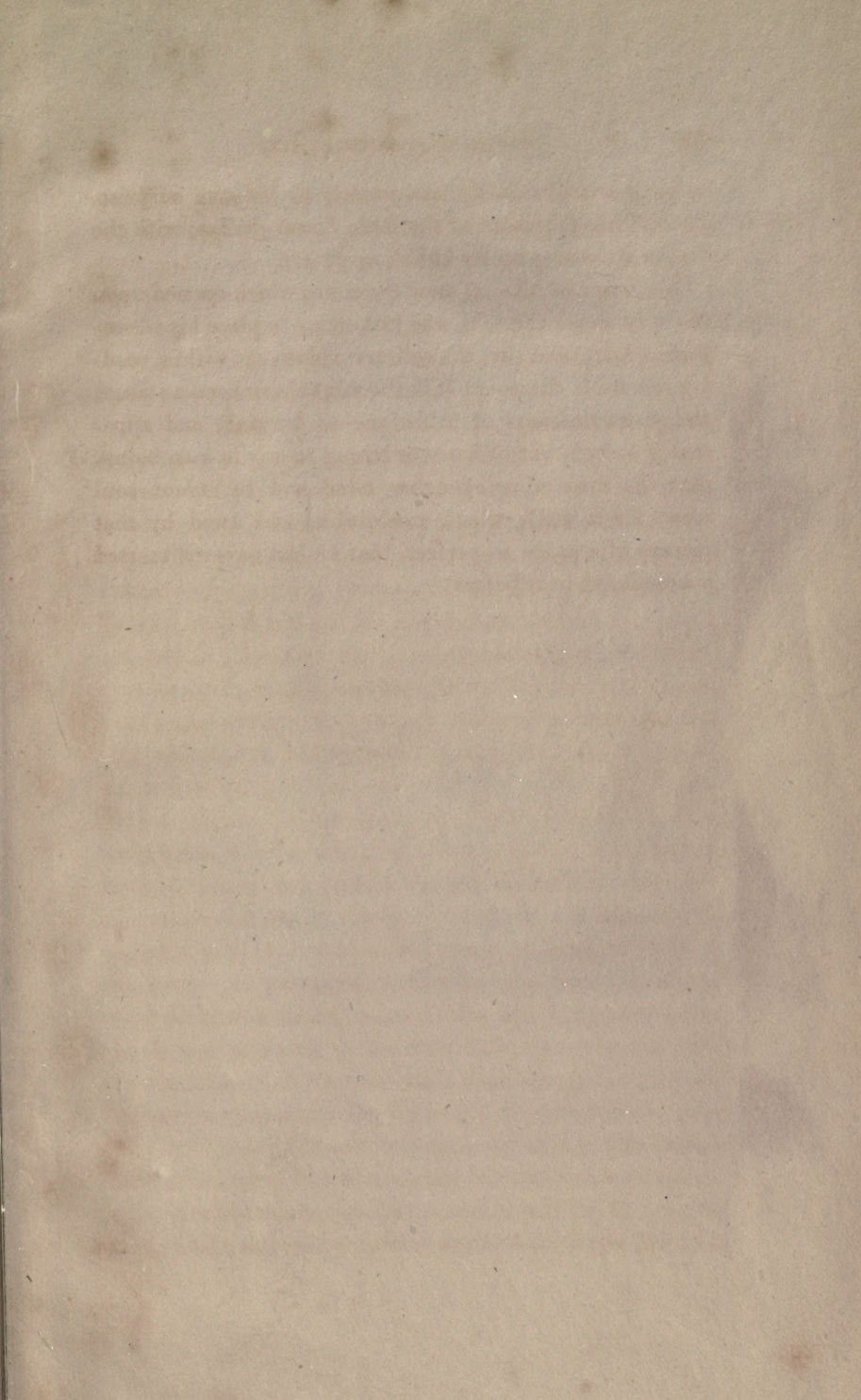
garet kept stored up in barns and granaries until the coming winter. Nothing could well be more offensive to the poor and needy than this; and bitter were the execrations against a woman, who herself had known the exigences of poverty, and yet could feel no more for those who still were suffering, without a gleam of hope to cheer their hard, uncared for lot.

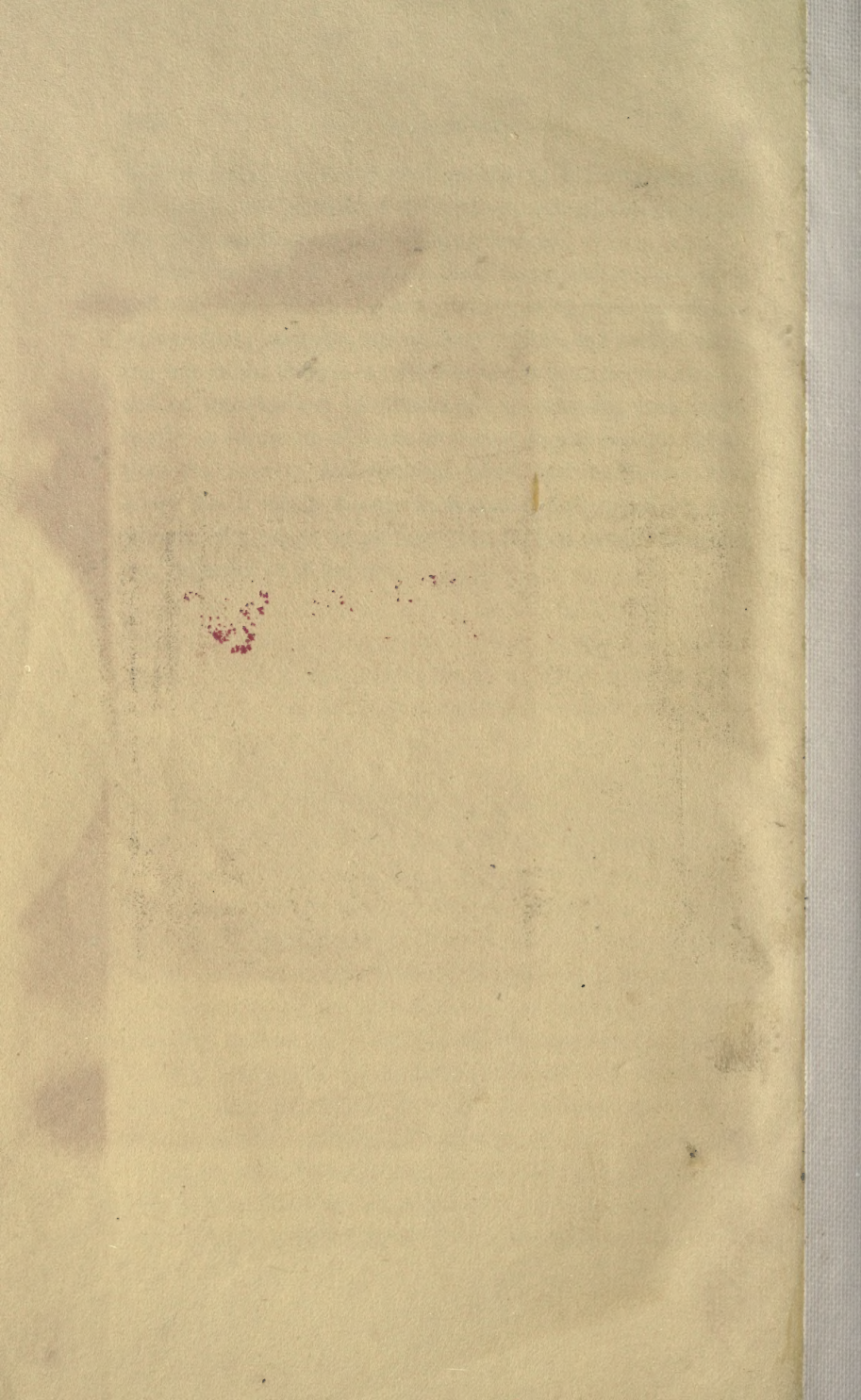
Little indeed were any of these murmuring spirits acquainted with the actual facts, or with the heart and character of her whom they were judging so severely. It is true that the barns and granaries at Hatherstone were filled with grain, and careful were the frugal hands that stored and kept the produce of the last year's harvest. Careful indeed was all the management about the place, yet nothing satisfied the discontented spirits; for when rumour spoke of this, and the other charges of revelry and indulgence were denied, then it was covetousness that the lone widow was condemned for, and that was a heavier offence than any other.

Had Morton on that evening been prepared to hear the sounds of banqueting or social merriment, he would have been surprised to find the solemn stillness reigning all around the place; except, indeed, in one distant and secluded part of the mansion, where at long intervals, a few sounds of passing feet, and servants occupied about their daily avocations, warned him not to approach too closely to that quarter. He knew, however, or he guessed, the direction of the terrace which ran along the garden-wall and communicated with the building on the opposite side; and, led by a strange curiosity to see the actual mode of living of one whose early life had been so differently circumstanced, he proceeded stealthily along this walk, until a sudden turn at the angle of the house brought

before him immediately, and greatly to his own surprise, the enchanted picture of the little flower-garden, with the fountain sending up its bubbling waters.

Nor was this all. A door there was which opened upon the very steps where he was just about to place his adventurous foot; and she, the solitary widow, sat within, reading her Bible there—so still, she might have been a statue; and so unconscious of intrusion—so trusting, and apparently so innocent of harm or wrong to any human being, that the man of evil-judging mind and turbulent soul stood for a while silent, immovable, and awed by that picture of a peace so perfect, that he had never witnessed nor believed in it before.





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